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Bing West from Afghanistan

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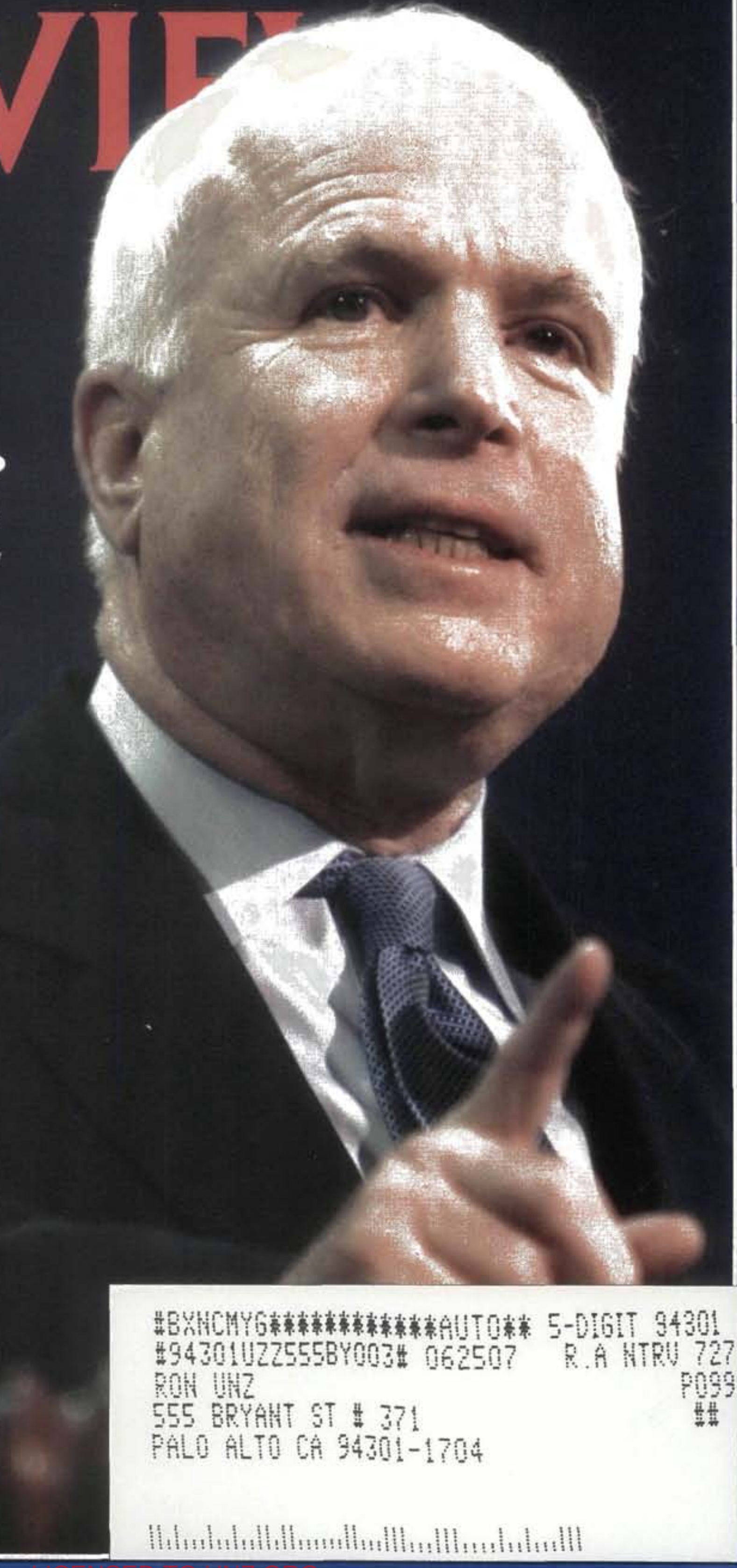

The Case for McCain

Ramesh Ponnuru

Atheism and Its Discontents

Michael Novak

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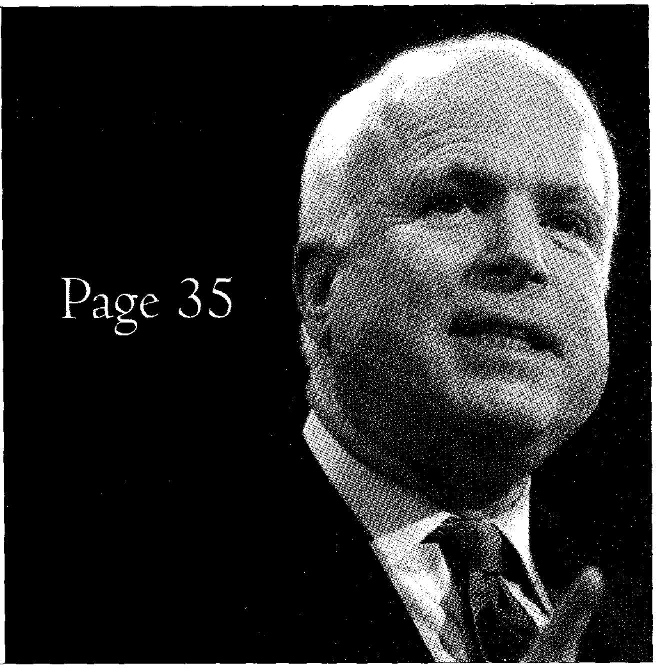
COVER STORY

The Coming McCain

John McCain's apostasies from conservatism, unlike Rudolph Giuliani's, are well known. The mayor's polls form a ceiling. McCain's could be a floor, if conservatives are willing to reconsider their view of him. If they do, then the current Giuliani moment will be succeeded by a McCain moment. I think conservatives will give him a second look—as they should. *By Ramesh Ponnuru*



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letters to the editor

WE MUST GO FROM KOREA

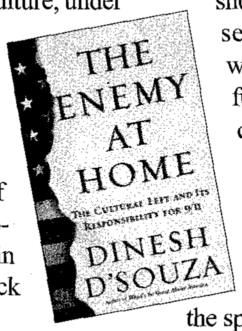
I would like to comment briefly on Jim Talent's excellent article "More," calling for a bigger U.S. military (March 5). While I agree with him on the need to keep the armed forces equipped and staffed properly for their missions, I also can't help wondering if our military is not simply overstretched. One case in point: Korea. Fifty years after the end of the Korean War, America still has a substantial presence in the South, numbering nearly 30,000 troops.

Some have been shifted to Iraq, but how many more could be useful along our hot fronts? Is it possible that America still has too many legacy Cold War commitments that could be reevaluated?

Frank Malo
Atlanta, Ga.

ENEMIES AT HOME AND ABROAD

Some points on Roger Kimball's review of Dinesh D'Souza's new book, *The Enemy at Home* ("Fight the Real Enemy," March 5): American culture, under the persistent encouragement of the organized Left and its judges, has deteriorated terribly in the past 50 years, and continues to get worse under the influence of cultural relativism. That provides an excuse, if not a main motive, for Islamists to attack the West and this country.



As Lincoln and others point out, we are a society of free people and we have a responsibility to ourselves to police and guide our culture, and to consider its impact on the rest of the world.

I doubt that the cultural Left is "secretly allied" with "the movement that bin Laden and Islamic radicals represent," as D'Souza has it, but they are recklessly playing into the hands of the Islamists.

John A. McVickar
Richmond, Va.

JUST A FEW TRILLIONS

In a recent edition of The Week (March 5), you stated that the "big news" about the 2008 budget proposed by President Bush "is that this budget makes a serious effort to rein in runaway entitlement costs." Thanks—I haven't had such a hearty laugh since the Clinton administration. Eleven years ago I watched President Clinton proclaim in the State of the Union address that "the era of big government is over." Of course the era of big government neither was nor is over, and this president's hopeful budget predictions must be taken with more than a grain of salt.

Timothy Mathews
Washington, D.C.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN?

If I have it right, John Derbyshire believes that we must stop imagining that the warning proffered in *Brave New World* applies to our circumstances ("Huxley's Period Piece," March 5)—after all, designer babies "ought to be welcomed by free citizens in a free society." The presentation of such an idea as normative shows that Mr. Derbyshire has himself bought into the brave new world. It is not hard to imagine a future in which parents, upon discovering some minor flaw in their designer baby, might cast it away and hold out for a better model. He attempts to distract us from such horrors by holding that biotechnology is set to "expand the sphere of human liberty." I suggest there is no other way to understand him but to see him attempting to sell shares in what he has already bought.

Bart Prentiss
Mountain Home, Ark.

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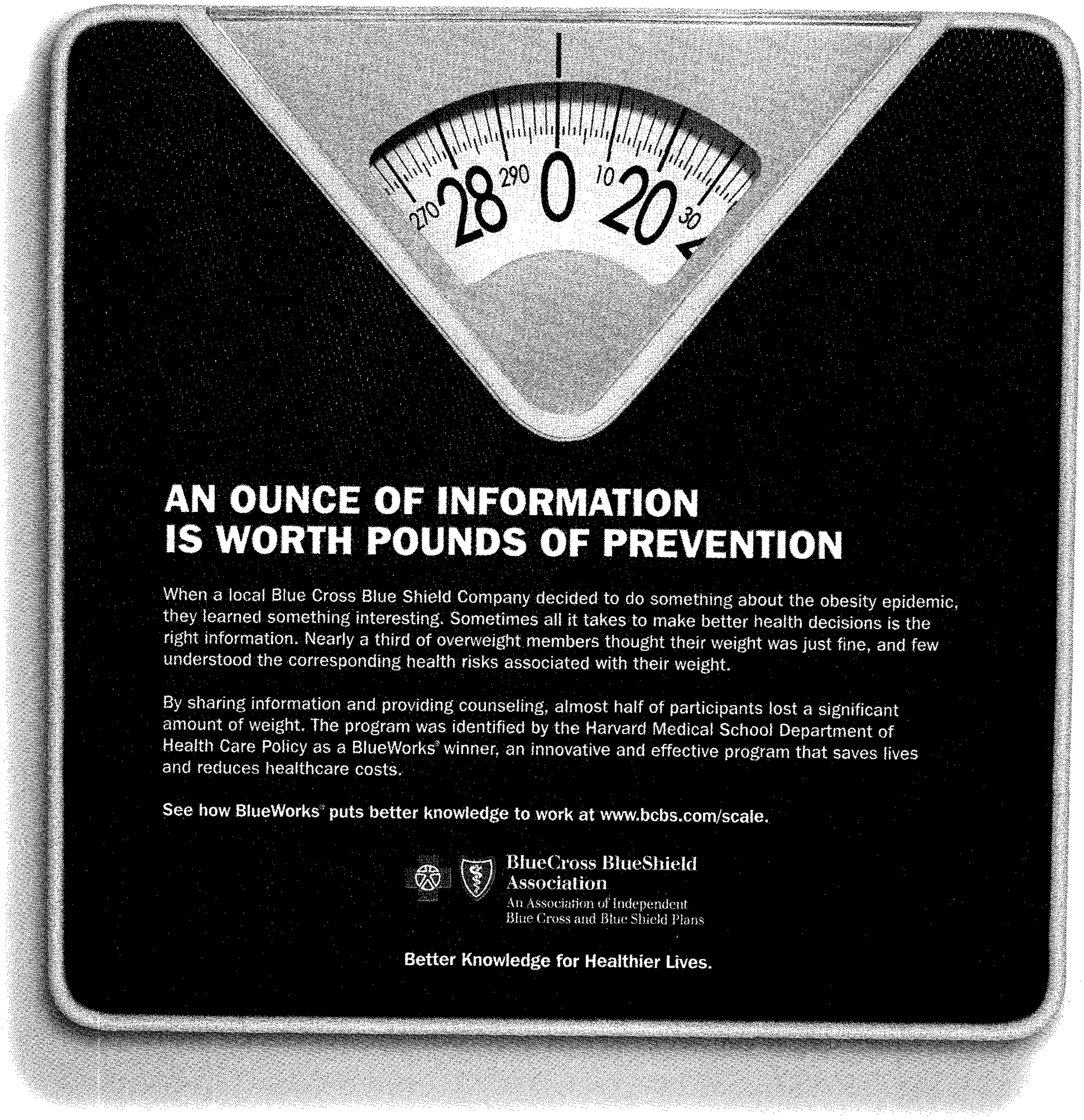

AN OUNCE OF INFORMATION IS WORTH POUNDS OF PREVENTION

When a local Blue Cross Blue Shield Company decided to do something about the obesity epidemic, they learned something interesting. Sometimes all it takes to make better health decisions is the right information. Nearly a third of overweight members thought their weight was just fine, and few understood the corresponding health risks associated with their weight.

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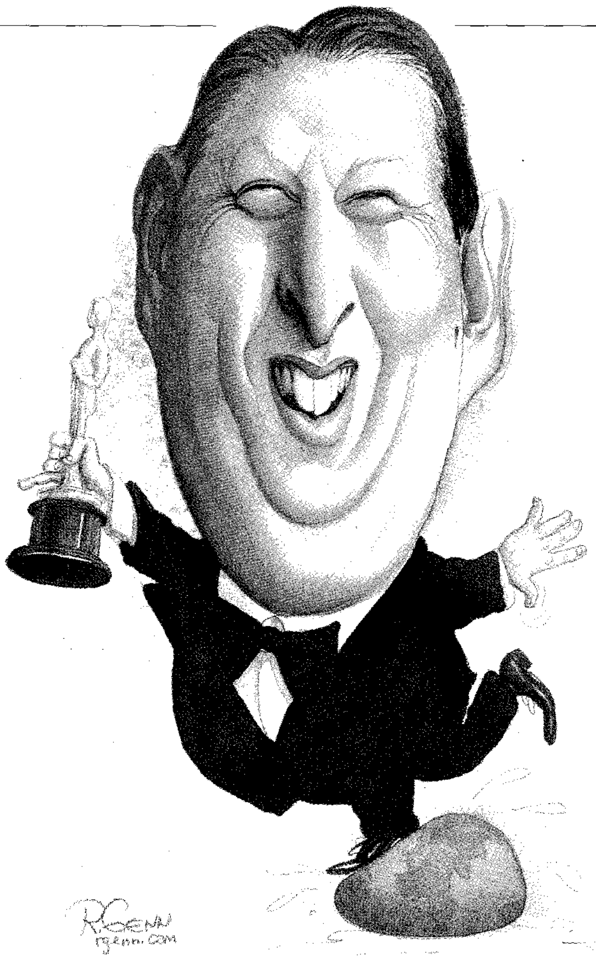

ROMAN GENN

■ Does this mean that Hillary Clinton is too unethical for Hollywood?

■ Election season nominally begins with the candidates announcing their campaigns; it truly begins with the first knife fight. The Clinton and Obama camps had that little rumble, thanks to David Geffen and Maureen Dowd. Geffen, the liberal Hollywood mogul (is there any other kind?), co-hosted a party that raised $1.3 million for Senator Obama, despite having raised $18 million for Bill Clinton in the past. Worse, he told Dowd that the GOP was digging up dirt on Bill; that Hillary is unable to say "I made a mistake" about voting to authorize the Iraq War; and that both Clintons are liars: "Everybody in politics lies, but they do it with such ease, it's troubling." So the Clinton campaign demanded that Obama condemn Geffen and return his money, to which the Obama campaign replied that the Clintons had no problem with Geffen when they let him sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom. Quick conventional wisdom scored St. Barack the loser, for letting his people play politics like ordinary folk. We are not so sure, since the Illinois senator reminded people of the Clintons' general ickiness. In any case, America will be embroiled with this grotesque couple—Hillary and Bill—for the next twelve months, at least.

■ John Edwards has a template for making sense out of Iraq. He told a crowd in Nashua, N.H., that our presence there was like scolding a child for not making his bed, then making the bed repeatedly. "We're continuing to enable this bad behavior." Over the last four years, millions of Iraqis have risked their lives to fight in the Iraqi army; to vote freely or hold office; to go to school, to mosque, or to the market. They have done all these things in the hope of having a better society than they had under Saddam Hussein (and one that would not make and use WMD, or support terrorists). They are in a battle to the death with the violent, some of them merely deluded, most of them outright terrorists themselves. And all former Sen. Hair can think of is a child-rearing manual. Better get a copy of that book; the adults will need it if he is ever elected.

■ Al Gore enjoyed a twofer on Oscar night. In case *An Inconvenient Truth* did not win for best documentary, he was given stage time with Leonardo DiCaprio to announce that the Oscars had gone green (presenters rode to the ceremony in hybrid vehicles). But of course *An Inconvenient Truth* did win in its category, so Gore got to play an encore with director Davis Guggenheim. "All of us," said Guggenheim, "were inspired by his fight for 30 years to tell this truth." Gore keeps saying he does "not have plans to become a candidate" again, but he's got a cult hit (documentaries are the talk radio of liberals); an issue insulated by moral purity from fact checking (he has refused to debate global-warming skeptic Bjorn Lomborg); 100 percent name recognition; and the luxury of letting the other guys, and girl, whack themselves silly. Those are inconvenient truths for Hillary, Obama, and former Sen. Hair.

■ Ramesh Ponnuru has the cover story in this issue of NR, making the conservative case for John McCain. Lest any of our dear readers be confused, this is not an official endorsement, but a bylined piece that is part of our ongoing coverage of the '08 race and debate about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. It's early yet, so prepare for many such pieces.

■ A *Washington Post* exposé found squalid conditions in a building that houses outpatients at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Embarrassed Army officials dispatched construction crews to remove mold, patch ceiling holes, and repair elevators. The Pentagon then resorted to the first refuge of derelict leaders: appointing an independent panel to investigate. The conclusion it can be expected to reach is that Army leadership has failed its wounded warriors by not vigorously overseeing their care. Walter Reed's medical staff is talented and dedicated, but its dysfunctional bureaucracy is plagued by lost files, excessive

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paperwork, and long delays in determinations on service discharges and disability status. Army secretary Francis Harvey says he is surprised and disappointed by the "inexcusable" treatment of wounded soldiers. What is really inexcusable is that he needed a newspaper to tell him about it.

■ In its initial stages, the Baghdad troop surge has shown promise. Shiite thug-cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has apparently fled to Iran, and he has ordered his militia not to fight us. We have been able to pick off some of his top leaders, and the Shiites' appalling ethnic-cleansing campaign against the Sunnis in Baghdad has lost momentum. It has been a commonplace for opponents of the surge to say that it is hopeless because we are sending more troops into a civil war—the assumption being that civil wars can never be checked from outside. But the experience of the Balkans—where we intervened twice and stopped civil wars—belies this assumption, as do the early effects of the surge. Civil wars can burn hotter or colder, depending on the correlation of forces on the ground. Of course, Sadr could always turn around and attack us, and the Sunni-extremist bombing campaign continues unabated. But it is still early. Only one of the five additional brigades slated for Baghdad has arrived, and the full complement of troops won't be there until May. The president's policy deserves a chance to work.

■ The courts are again considering whether our treatment of detainees should follow the standards of war, or of ordinary criminal cases. In the latest decision, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals found that Congress had stripped suspected-terrorist detainees of the right to challenge their detention in federal court, and that Congress acted constitutionally when it did that. That is the correct decision on both legal and policy grounds. As centrist legal commentator Stuart Taylor Jr. remarks, we don't want Marines to be pulled out of Afghanistan to justify their captures in a hearing. It may be that our detention practices need changing, if only to make other countries more willing to extradite suspected terrorists to us. A range of experts—including Taylor; Neal Katyal, who has represented detainees in court; and former prosecutor and NR contributor Andrew McCarthy—have suggested the need for new national-security courts with judges familiar with the peculiar imperatives of this area of law. Whether to create such new procedures is for Congress, not the courts, to decide.

■ Some people try to split the difference on abortion by saying that the unborn should be protected after "viability" but not before it. This rule wouldn't make much sense: Early-stage fetuses require congenial environments to survive and thus are not "viable," but the same is true of newborns and toddlers. The "viability" standard also shifts with advances in medicine. For the first time, a baby born at 22 weeks is thriving. Perhaps her example will cause some people to re-examine their assumptions, or at least to ask why a 22-week-old can be a patient in one hospital room and a "terminated pregnancy" in another.

■ The Supreme Court threw out an $80 million judgment against Philip Morris. The plaintiff's lawyer had told the jury to think about all the people whom the company was hurting when it decided how much to award in punitive damages. But the Court found that the company couldn't fairly be punished for damages to people who weren't involved in the lawsuit. We agree that the damage award was excessive. But the Court's logic is hard to credit. The Court would let juries consider harm to non-litigants in deciding how "reprehensible" a company's actions were, but not consider harm in imposing damages. Where is that in the Constitution? The courts have a role to play in reining in litigation, but that role should not be to engage in ad hoc and extra-constitutional judicial rule-making.

■ Our spending on health care will double over the next decade, according to a new government study. By 2016, almost a fifth of the economy will be devoted to health care. President Bush highlighted these facts while renewing his call to reform the tax treatment of health care. Under his proposal, the tax code would no longer reward people for buying expensive health insurance through their employer. They would receive the same tax break whether they bought insurance for themselves or through their company, and whether they bought a cheap plan or a lavish one. There is nothing wrong with a country's spending more money on health as it grows richer and older. But we could get more health care for the dollar if we rationalized our system along the lines the president has proposed.

■ "This is one area where I think people stand entirely together," says New Jersey governor Jon Corzine. Too true. Whether they're Democrats or Republicans, governors would like federal money to help them pay for their health-care promises. When Congress set up the State Children's Health Insurance Program in the 1990s—thank you, Orrin Hatch and Ted Kennedy—

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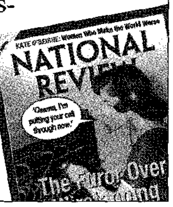

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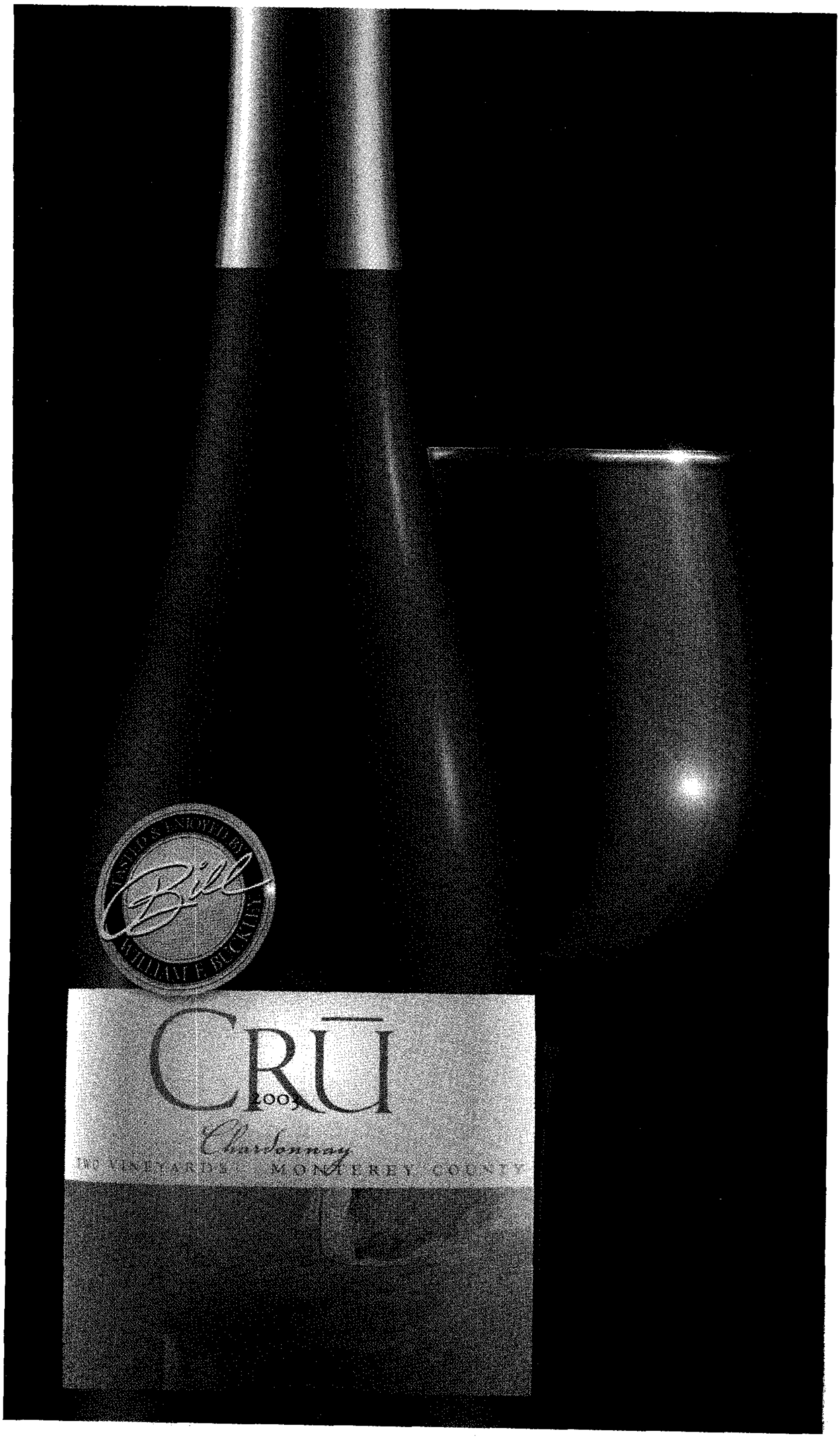
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expenses were capped at $40 billion for the decade. But the states expanded coverage, and came back for more money, which they got. Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Arizona went over their allotments by signing up *adults* for the program. Corzine's New Jersey covers kids in families that make three-and-a-half times the poverty level. Instead of bailing out the governors, Congress should ask them to make sure they're spending money where they're supposed to be.

■ Senate Democrats want to give Transportation Security Administration employees collective-bargaining power. Apparently their solution to recent TSA failures is to make incompetent employees even harder to fire. Last October, TSA screeners at Newark Airport failed 20 of 22 undercover security tests in a week (though many dangerous sets of tweezers were confiscated). The Democrats' plan to grant TSA employees broad new protections would only make matters worse. Firing unionized federal workers is so difficult that the inept ones stick around forever. Such inflexibility should not be imposed on the agency tasked with protecting Americans from airplane hijackings. If the Republicans were doing this kind of

Go Flat—Now

"OLD SCHOOL" progressives argue that marginal tax rates should increase with income. Their political might in the U.S. has led to a tax code that is steeply progressive. The bottom half of the income distribution pays almost no tax at all. The top 10 percent, by contrast, paid 52.3 percent of all federal taxes in 2004.

This tilt against the rich is accomplished with marginal tax rates that increase as your income does, from 0 to 35 percent. Many economists have argued that high marginal tax rates can be harmful to economic growth, and that steeply progressive tax schemes might not achieve progressive objectives. The costs of lower growth, after all, are borne by someone, and the poor are first in line when suffering is doled out in a weakening economy. These arguments have had little political force, however. Attempts to lower top tax rates are lampooned as giveaways to the rich.

But peering only at tax rates gives us a woefully misleading picture of a tax system's distributional impact. The data increasingly suggest that the best progressive policy would rely less on brute-force redistribution, and that the right tax reform would boost wages and benefit everyone. A "new school" of progressives—many of them residing in the former Soviet Union—is recognizing this fact.

The nearby chart illustrates the point quite dramatically. Perhaps the most "radical" of conservative reforms is the flat tax, which allows only one positive tax rate on income. Old-school progressives have opposed such a tax, claiming that it transfers the tax burden from the rich to the middle class and the poor.

The chart shows the average wage in countries that have adopted a flat tax, both before and after tax reform. What's clear is that the average wage in these flat-tax countries has skyrocketed. For example, the average Estonian wage was $84.20 per month over the two years before tax reform; in the five years after reform, it increased more than 265 percent, to $308.20 per month. It's true that other changes in Estonia over this period might also have influenced wages, but the pattern across countries is consistent and clear: Wages go up markedly after a flat tax is introduced.

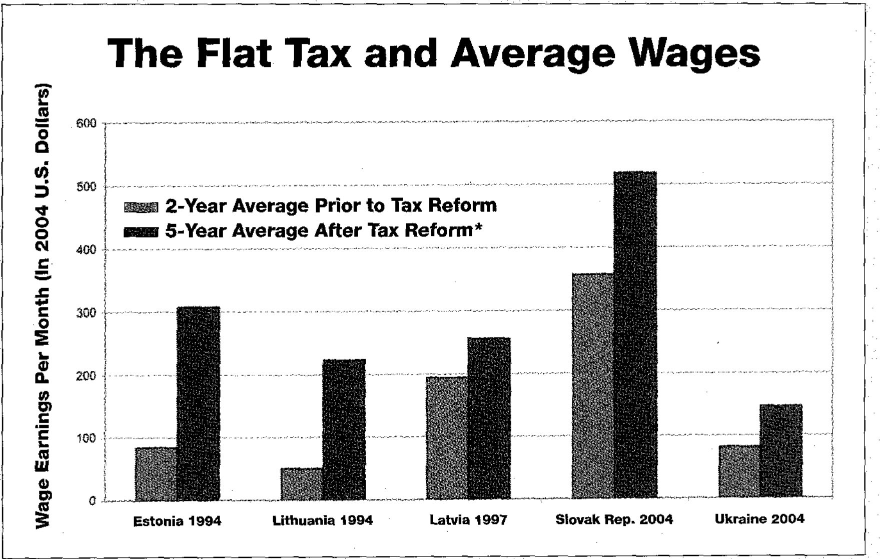
Wages have not shown such increases in economically comparable countries that have not adopted a flat tax. On average, wages in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Tajikistan went up only 8 percent in the five years after 1994.

Even the direct impact of a flat tax (ignoring, that is, its tendency to boost wages) need not be harmful to the poor, since flat taxes commonly exempt a large amount of income. Indeed, a recent paper for the International Monetary Fund said that "the distributional effects of the flat taxes are not unambiguously regressive, and in some cases they may have increased progressivity."

All this makes a powerful case that the best progressive policy is a flat tax that exempts a healthy share of income. Properly designed, it would be distributionally neutral at the outset, and hugely beneficial to the working poor once wages began to rise.

It's time to shut the old school down.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



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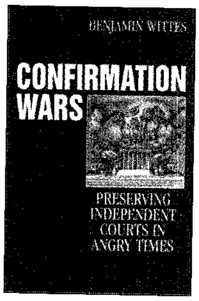
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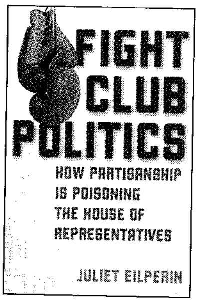
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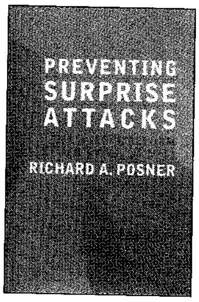
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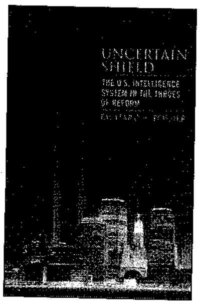
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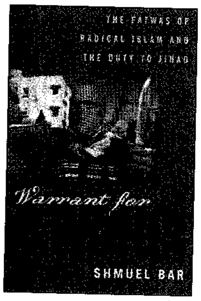
THE FATWAS OF RADICAL ISLAM AND THE DUTY TO JIHAD
Warrant for
SHMUEL BAR

Warrant for Terror
The Fatwas of Radical Islam and the Duty to Jihad
Shmuel Bar

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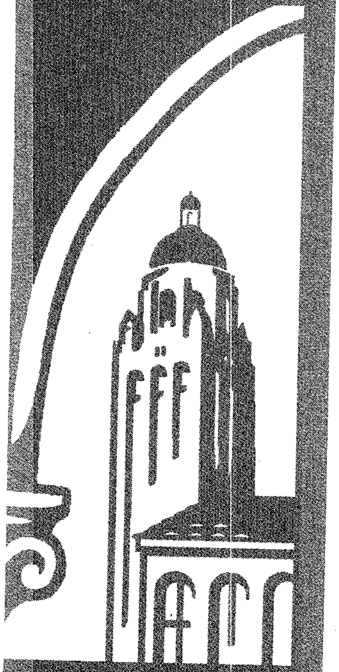

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THE WEEK...

favor for one of their biggest campaign contributors, the Democrats would be screaming about the "culture of corruption." Now that the majority's on the other foot, we're supposed to believe that this sop to organized labor is merely part of the Democrats' historic concern for the working man. We'll believe that . . . when tweezers fly.

■ Since 1994, labor unions have reportedly donated more than half a billion dollars to Democratic candidates. Now that the Democrats have control of Congress, they've decided to repay Big Labor with the disingenuously named Employee Free Choice Act of 2007. The law would revoke the right of workers to a secret-ballot election overseen by the National Labor Relations Board board when voting on whether to form a union. Publicly signed union cards would now be allowed to count as votes instead (hence "card check"). This would expose workers to union pressure tactics—which is why unions see card-check legislation as a way to shore up their declining numbers, and Democrats see it as a way to bolster a constituency that delivers both votes and money. The president rightly plans to veto the legislation if it hits his desk.

■ "The United States has overstepped its national borders, and in every area." Such is the opinion of Russian president Vladimir Putin, voiced at a meeting of the great and the good in Munich. It is rather—how shall we say?—fresh of him to accuse others of faults he himself commits as and when he chooses. He tried to buy the Ukrainian election, menaces Georgia and Belarus and the Baltic republics, supplies nuclear technology and weaponry to Iran and missiles to Syria, uses energy supplies to blackmail customers in Europe, impedes investigation into the murder in London of Alexander Litvinenko with polonium 210, evidently procured in Russia—why, anyone might conclude that the old KGB implanted in his mind an unchangeable picture of a world in which Russia could do as it pleased to any country, especially those within its "bloc." Putin is currently enraged by an American proposal to deploy a missile-defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. Both countries are now independent, members of NATO as well, but Putin treats them as though they were still Soviet satellites, and if the missile-defense system goes ahead he threatens to tear up disarmament agreements reached by Reagan and Gorbachev. Add to that Putin's muzzling of free speech and his riding roughshod over foreign investors, oil companies above all. If this is to be Cold War II, we know whom to blame.

TONY BLAIR SKIDDOOS

Call him poodle if you must;
He manned Basra till a gust
(Peerage scandals didn't help)
Blew him homeward with a yelp.
Back in Blighty, where "kow-tow!"
Drowns out Mr. Blair's bow-wow,
Who will wag across the pond?
Clue me in; we'll correspond.

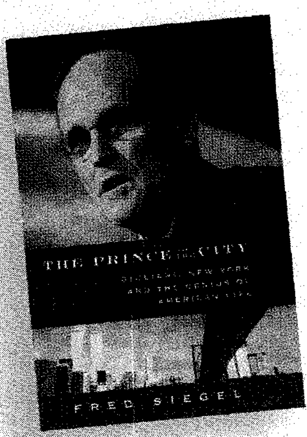
—W. H. VON DREELE

ANWAR HUSSEIN COLLECTION/GETTY

■ When the Blues and Royals, a British cavalry regiment, deploy to Iraq in the next few months, Cornet Wales will go with them. He is better known as Prince Harry, younger son of Prince Charles and the late Diana, and third in line to the throne. "There's no way I'm going to put myself through Sandhurst," he once told an interviewer, "and then sit on my arse back home while my boys are out fighting for their country." Over the millennia, aristocrats could enjoy their feasts, gold, concubines, and power because they fought. As our manners have softened and our morality has improved, we have placed a lower value on mere combat, and distributed the rewards and responsibilities of citizenship more widely. But a sense of the primal contract, an after-image from Homer and *Beowulf,* still lingers, certainly in Cornet Wales's family (his uncle, Prince Andrew, and his grandfather, Prince Philip, are both combat veterans). Fight well, and Godspeed.

■ Prime Minister Tony Blair lit a small firestorm by announcing that, in the coming months, 1,600 out of a total of 7,100 British troops are to be withdrawn from Basra and its surrounding province in southern Iraq. Also in the coming months, Blair is due to leave office, and his critics have jumped in to complain that the withdrawal of troops is only a cheap and last-minute effort to regain lost popularity for the sake of his "legacy." Those with a vested political interest in quagmire and defeat are hoping that the U.S. has lost its principal ally. How come, they ask, the British are leaving just as the Americans are surging in? The British have done much: In their zone of responsibility, they have supervised the return of the Marsh Arabs, settled tribal disputes, and generally kept the lid on things. And a thousand British troops are being posted to reinforce the several thousand already confronting the Taliban in Afghanistan. We are uneasy about the reduction of Brits in Iraq, but that the U.K. is still a strong ally, there can be no doubting.

■ Building bridges, normally a positive act, is cause for protest and violence in Jerusalem. In early February, the Israel Antiquities Authority set about building a bridge to the Temple Mount to replace a walkway that had been damaged by snow in 2004. The Temple Mount is a contentious place, home to the ruins of the second Jewish Temple, the holiest site in Judaism, as well as the al-Aqsa mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam. Palestinian Muslim leaders quickly spread the rumor that the Jews were trying to destroy the mosque, which stands some 300 feet from the bridge and has gone untouched. The Israeli government has offered to stream round-the-clock video of the project in order to assuage Muslim fears and quell


THE PRINCE OF THE CITY
GIULIANI, NEW YORK AND THE GENIUS OF AMERICAN LIFE
FRED SIEGEL

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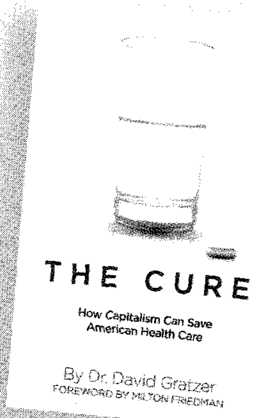
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By Dr. David Gratzer
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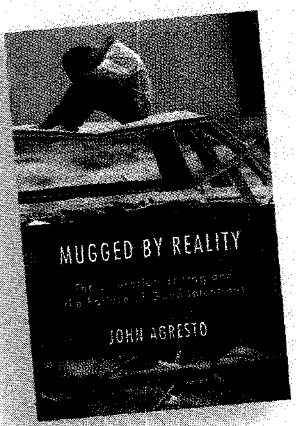
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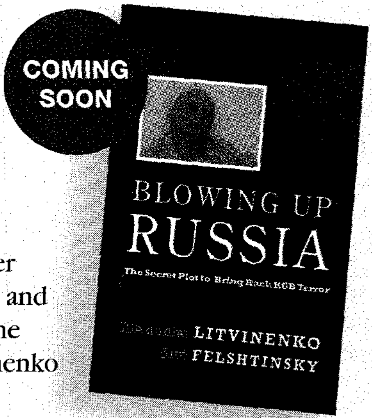
BLOWING UP RUSSIA

THE SECRET PLOT TO BRING BACK KGB TERROR

by Alexander Litvinenko and Yuri Feltshinsky | ISBN: 978-1-594032-01-1 | $25.95

Major breaking news in the US just months ago, *Blowing Up Russia* uncovers the truths behind the successful plot to assassinate Alexander Livineko. Unlike the other books coming out about this hot news story, this one was written by the deceased and has unprecedented insider material that other books will lack. Yuri Feltshinsky is the author of several books on Russia and was one of the last people to speak to Litvinenko before the latter succumbed to radioactive poisoning.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■ The ancient Chinese system of feng shui seeks to improve one's health and fortune by arranging one's living and working spaces so as to be in harmony with their natural surroundings. Consider, for example, the case of Fumin County, in southwest China. The county is of course administered by a committee of the Chinese Communist Party, and that committee has an office building, which unfortunately faces the barren face of a mountain—barren because it was used as a quarry until recently. Quarrying scars the landscape and offends the spirits of the earth. Bad feng shui! What to do? After much secret consultation, in which no doubt Marxist-Leninist dialectic was rigorously applied, the party committee decided to paint the mountainside green. They proceeded to do so, with ten workers spraying the mountainside with green paint for twenty days. Cue Rodgers & Hart: "In a mountain greenery / Where God paints the scenery . . ." In a Communist country there is no God, so scenery-painting has to be done by the laboring masses.

■ "I'll put a girdle round about the earth," says one of Shakespeare's characters. *Forbes* magazine has been round the earth putting girdles on its human inhabitants—to be exact, measuring how fat the inhabitants of the world's 194 nations and territories are, as measured by the body mass index (weight relative to height) of persons older than 15. The tiny Pacific nation of Nauru leads the world, with 94.5 percent of its inhabitants overweight. In fact, of the top ten nations, eight are in the Pacific. The two that aren't are Kuwait at number eight and, oh dear, the United States at number nine. Of advanced nations, Singapore (No. 162) and Japan (No. 163) are the leanest. *Forbes* blames obesity on Western nutritional habits, sedentary lifestyles, and stressful jobs. Doesn't McDonalds have a Singapore franchise? Do the *salarimen* of Osaka jog to their low-stress jobs? It seems to us there must be other factors at work. We shall discuss the matter over the pizza and donuts we've ordered in for the office lunch. Extra soda with orders over $40!

■ The names of sports teams are supposed to convey certain ideas: courage, valor, pride, and so on. That's why many teams, such as the Atlanta Braves, the Chicago Blackhawks, and the Florida State Seminoles, have chosen Indian monikers and mascots. Several years ago, a poll in *Sports Illustrated* found that 81 percent of Indians supported the use of Indian team names by colleges and universities—the respondents rightly saw them as signs of respect and admiration. But the NCAA, responding to tribal activists and cowed by political correctness, has spent the last several years cracking down on the practice. The latest victim is Chief Illiniwek, sometime mascot of the University of Illinois. The NCAA had moved to block the school from holding postseason events unless it changed its insensitive ways. Illinois's teams will still be known as the Fighting Illini, though it's hard to say for how long. On the matter of Chief Illiniwek, the administration considered it wiser to surrender—something that many real Indian warriors never did.

■ Jesse Jackson thinks there are too many white people in showbiz. This might seem like an odd judgment, given the number of nonwhite faces in those Academy Award nomination clips, and given also that showbiz has been one of the major avenues for the advancement of black Americans in modern times; but Reverend Jackson believes it nonetheless. He is organizing a conference on the topic, to be held in April. NR press passes have been applied for. The Righteous Rev. points to a recent study by UCLA law professor and "antidiscrimination" expert Russell Robinson claiming to show that 69 percent of Hollywood roles are reserved for white actors. Nor is the injustice restricted to Hollywood, says Jackson. The Sultan of Shakedowns wants us to know that hosts on many cable networks are nearly all Caucasian; or, as the Guru of Guilt puts it in his inimitable style: "All day, all night, all white." Keep racial resentment alive! Keep racial resentment alive!

■ Following the astronaut love triangle story, reported here in our last issue, there has been some curiosity about NASA's procedures for dealing with an astronaut who becomes unhinged while in orbit. NASA has now supplied the details from a 1,051-page manual covering every conceivable medical emergency in space. Severe behavioral problems take up five pages. In brief: The berserk spaceperson's crewmates should bind his wrists and ankles with duct tape, tie him down with a bungee cord, and inject him with tranquilizers if necessary, speaking soothingly to him the while. (Shuttle medical kits include anti-psychotic medication, we are told.) All very encouraging, though the mental image of astronauts struggling to subdue a thrashing colleague in zero gravity leaves one wondering whether NASA has actually carried out any simulations. If they have, the film footage might revive public interest in the space program.

■ A party of twelve Americans, senior citizens on a Caribbean cruise, were set upon by three muggers when visiting the beach district in Limon, Costa Rica. The muggers brandished a knife and a gun. The tourists responded with courage and vigor. With lethal vigor, in fact: One 70-year-old tourist—a retired military man, we are not surprised to learn—killed the lead mugger with his bare hands. He put a head lock on the thug, and when he relaxed his grip, the mugger had left the Caribbean for a much warmer place. The other oldsters put up enough of a show to send the surviving muggers fleeing. Local authorities did not press charges for the killing, and the tourists continued on their cruise. Moral of the story: Don't

CHIEF ILLINIWEK: SCOTT BOEHM/GETTY   JESSE JACKSON: PETER KRAMER/GETTY

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mess with the U.S.; and take special care not to mess with the senior cohort of Americans, who were raised in the age before "sensitivity" and "conflict resolution"—the age before teachers and parents taught their charges that fighting is wrong, wrong, wrong.

■ Chimps, our nearest relatives in the animal kingdom, are in the news. *Item:* Chimps in Senegal, West Africa, have been seen hunting with spears. The chimps apparently make them themselves, in some cases sharpening the tip of the spear with their teeth. *Item:* Further south in Ivory Coast, archeologists have uncovered crude stone tools that were used by chimps to crack nuts in a "Chimp Stone Age" 4,300 years ago. *Item:* The most recent comparative study of human and chimp genomes suggests that speciation—the splitting of a precursor species into proto-humans and proto-chimps—occurred much more recently that was thought, a mere 4 million years ago. *Bottom line:* The behavioral and genetic distances between us and our prognathous pals are less than was previously believed. No surprise to readers of the showbiz press, but food for thought nonetheless.

AT WAR

Silly Games in Serious Times

WHILE other House Democrats were pretending that their nonbinding resolution against the Iraq troop surge was of great import, anti-war champion John Murtha had a different message. This was not "the real vote," he said in a webcast for the left-wing site MoveCongress.org. Murtha wanted instead to require that troops have a year at home before redeploying, that they train with their own equipment before deploying, and so on. Because the too-small U.S. military is under enormous strain, these readiness conditions would be impossible to meet while still doubling the number of U.S. combat troops in Baghdad. Or, as Murtha put it, the troops "won't be able to do the work." A convenient outcome for the anti-war Left.

Democrats began to back away from the Murtha proposal once it was clear that it united Republicans and divided their own caucus. So now it is Sen. Carl Levin who is stepping into the breach with a proposal of his own to hamstring President Bush's conduct of the war.

Levin wants to repeal the 2002 war authorization and reauthorize a narrower range of objectives. He would limit our mission to counterterrorism, training for Iraqi troops, and border security, and would set a March 31, 2008, goal for withdrawing most troops from Iraq.

This proposal doesn't even make sense on its face. Its supporters say it will keep us from getting embroiled in a civil war in Baghdad. But al-Qaeda in Iraq, a Sunni terrorist organization, is one of the combatants in that civil war. A sensible counterterrorism mission in Iraq will therefore inevitably involve fighting the Sunni insurgency in Baghdad, as well as restraining Shiite militias and buttressing the legitimately constituted government in order to prevent the Sunni population from being pushed farther into the insurgency's arms.

In any case, the Levin proposal is constitutionally dubious. If the reauthorization is merely hortatory it will have no force, while if it is more far-reaching it will trespass on the president's authority to conduct the war (just as Murtha's proposal would). Congress is not fit—nor was it ever intended—to direct military operations. Levin argues that Congress can set the mission and then the president can decide how to discharge it, but this is basically a distinction without a difference, since a mission and its discharge are so intimately related. Indeed, Levin is proposing his reauthorization only because he wants to influence the discharge of our mission in Iraq.

Congress is not powerless here. It has an awesome authority: to deny funds for the war and thereby end it entirely. If Levin wants U.S. combat operations to end by April 2008, he can simply work to cut off any funding past that date. But Democrats aren't willing to weather the political attacks that would come with cutting off funding for troops in the field. Levin has gone so far as to call such a cut-off "the wrong thing to do, morally." So he is denying to himself and his party the one constitutional and effective way to stop the war. Such are the contortions of a party that—thank goodness—doesn't have the courage of its anti-war convictions.

2008

Mitt and His Moves

THE current narrative about Mitt Romney's political positioning—a narrative driven by both the media and conservative critics—has jeopardized the candidate's plan to be a credible conservative alternative to the frontrunners. In staking out positions to the right of John McCain and Rudy Giuliani on issues important to conservative voters, the former Massachusetts governor is also to the right of his former self. Skeptics see more naked ambition than sincere conversion in Romney's shifts on multiple issues, including abortion, gun control, gay rights, and taxes.

Conservatives should hope Romney's campaign does not fizzle. For three decades, candidates who have moved to the right in Republican presidential primaries have been rewarded rather than punished. Conservative openness to converts has made it possible for moderate Republicans who find themselves moving rightward to prosper, and has given ideologically malleable Republicans an incentive to adopt conservative positions. In both cases, the effect has been to facilitate the country's move right.

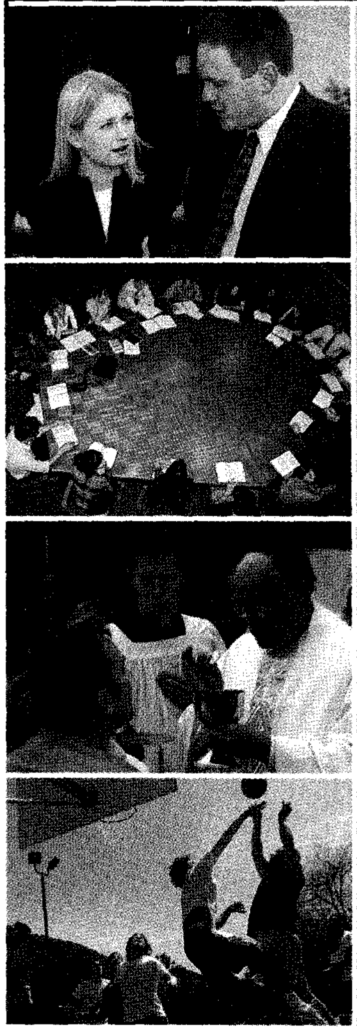
Conservatives should want to keep it that way. Therefore, the gleeful pounding away at Romney's changes by some on the right is counterproductive. Do any of these critics really wish that Romney had remained pro-choice? Pro-choicers didn't object when Al Gore, Dick Gephardt, and Jesse Jackson moved their way on abortion—they welcomed the converts.

Still, there is a sense that Romney has moved too far, too recently, on too much. Because a frankly conservative Republican would be unelectable in Massachusetts, it is understandable that so badly outnumbered a politician would emphasize some issues and soft-pedal others. It is natural that he might say he is personally pro-life, but would not try to change laws in Massachusetts; that he would oppose same-sex marriage, but otherwise promote gay rights; even that he would duck the Reaganite label. In any case, Romney is a career businessman who spent far more time thinking about management and government reform than about social issues and political philosophy.

His difficulty is obviously in transitioning from Massachusetts to the national stage. Part of what Romney needs is simply time, and even though the campaign season is already supercharged and the news cycles relentless, he will get it. It is still ten months before anyone votes, and conservatives will have a chance to evaluate Romney's sincerity and honesty over these months. But his conservatism will likely continue to sound tinny until he gives it an overarching theme of his own.

George W. Bush moved right in preparation for his presidential run in 2000, but also thought through a new brand of conservatism that he figured would be attractive in the post-Gingrich, post-impeachment era. We have never been particular fans of "compassionate conservatism," but Romney would be well advised, in a similar fashion, to figure out a distinctive way to apply his conservatism to the challenges of our time. This individuation would help authenticate that conservatism, and make it sufficiently compelling to prevail in the general election. At the moment, Romney is running on a businessman's typical theme of competitiveness along with a paint-by-the-numbers collection of conservative positions that seem to have no deeper rationale than getting the candidate to the right.

That was enough to put Romney into the top tier of candidates, but won't be enough for him to thrive there. The ex-governor is a talented and impressive man. We believe he can play a significant and salutary role in this race, but probably not by merely checking all the conservative boxes.



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> Back in the Cold War, whenever I had to review an unreadable book, I always comforted myself with the thought, 'Maybe the Russians will drop the Bomb and I won't have to finish reading this.' Those were the days. This time, stuck with *A Pilgrim's Way: The Personal Story of the Episcopal Bishop Charged with Heresy for Ordaining a Gay Man Who Was in a Committed Relationship*, by the Rt. Rev. Walter C. Righter, author of the longest subtitle in publishing history, all I could hope for was an asteroid.

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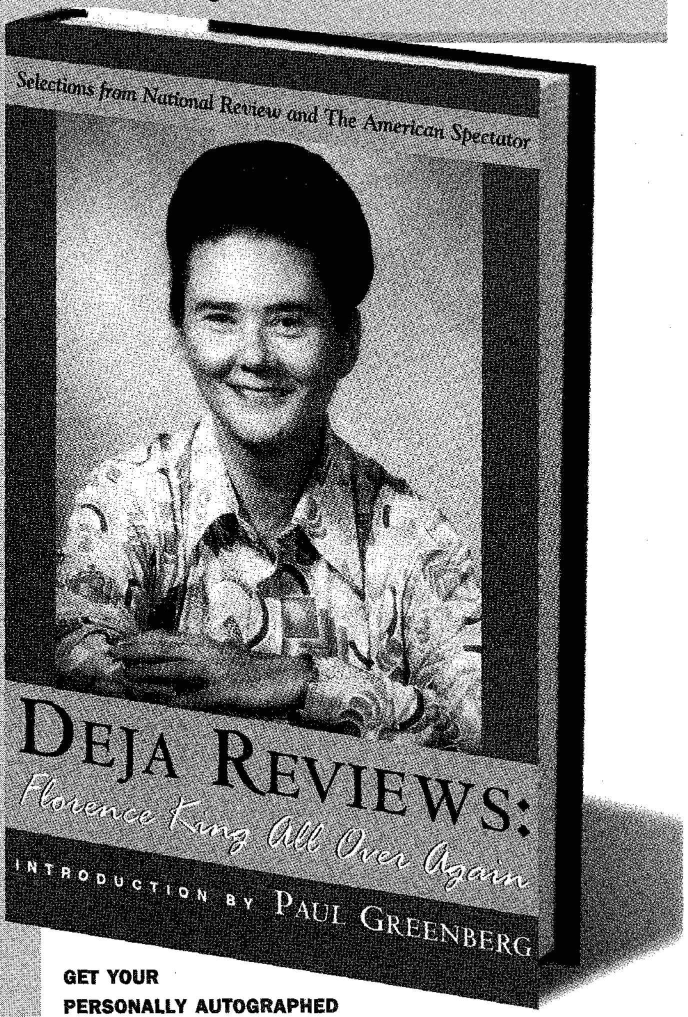
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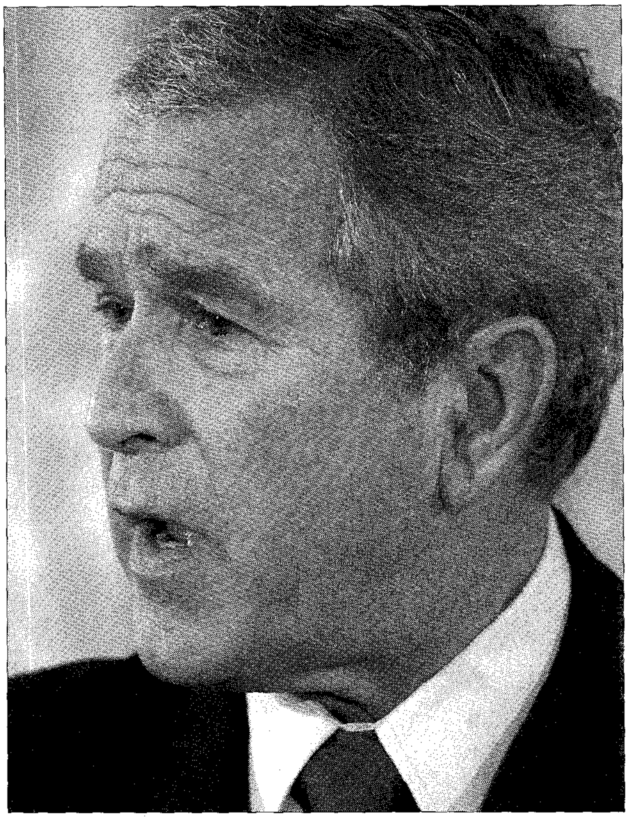

PUBLIC POLICY

Immigration Endgame

A high price to pay for the president's legacy

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

PRESIDENT BUSH is facing a number of endgames in the next few weeks and months. His principal endgame is slightly farther out—namely, the end of his presidency. But that is causing him to seek, somewhat desperately, to construct a praiseworthy "legacy" by which to warm himself during the long winter of retirement.

What he would most like, presumably, is the success of the surge in Iraq. Iraq is the central issue of his presidency—and the second endgame in sight. If his intervention there is thought to have failed, that failure will overwhelm any other success he might achieve. At present the surge shows signs of beginning to succeed.

Unfortunately, the more those signs accumulate, the more Democrats and the establishment media will cry havoc and let loose the dogs of "peace." Still more unfortunately, even if the Iraq venture does succeed to the extent of establishing a stable, moderate, and decent pro-American government—one closer to democracy than most of its neighbors—that fact is likely to become generally accepted only several years after Bush has left office. So the search is on for other issues to decorate the legacy in the meantime.

Here an obstacle is immediately apparent: The Democrats are now in charge of both houses of Congress. Any legacy issue must be minimally acceptable to them. All those conservative hopes of yesteryear—Social Security reform, in particular—have turned into mist in the chill air of opposition. Their disappearance leaves disappointingly little behind: more money for the "No Child Left Behind" nationalization of education, an "energy independence" measure that (combined with bows to Kyoto) is likely to raise costs for U.S. industry without achieving energy independence, and—oh yes—comprehensive immigration reform.

Comprehensive immigration reform is what the Beltway calls a bipartisan issue—namely, one supported by almost all Democrats and a minority of Republicans. On this particular issue, moreover, Bush is a passionate member of that minority. Outside the Beltway, more or less open immigration is supported by corporate and cultural elites and opposed by more than 70 percent of voters. But the elite support is so strongly felt that the issue is falsely presented in the media as a dispute between most (enlightened) Americans, on one hand, and bigots, xenophobes, and the Republican "base" on the other.

When the last round of immigration reform was presented shortly before the midterm elections, the establishment media explicitly called for a speedy vote on the wonderfully disingenuous grounds that any debate on the proposed legislation risked spreading falsehoods about it. For "falsehoods," read "truths"—truths of which many legislators were ignorant until debate exposed them. When Sen. Jeff Sessions merely listed the legal, fiscal, and economic consequences of the "amnesty plus guest worker" bill in the opening Senate debate, he consigned it to defeat. The Bush-Democrat coalition made attempts to revive it under different names and sponsors, but they foundered on rock-ribbed Republican opposition. Most Republican senators and almost all House Republicans rejected the measure. And the bill died with the last Congress.

Since the election it has reemerged as a joint project of Bush (seeking a legacy), the Democrats (seeking long-term political advantage), and Sen. John McCain (seeking to position himself for the 2008 presidential election as a non-Republican Republican). But the Democrats are divided in an interesting way on how to proceed.

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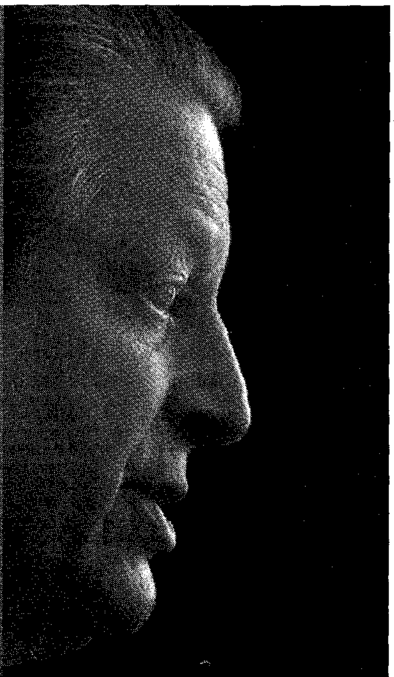

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Democratic senators under the leadership of Ted Kennedy, who are writing the first version of legislation with help from ethnic interest groups and immigration lawyers, have largely excluded Republicans from their legislative planning. This has prompted Republicans who supported last year's proposed reforms, such as Sen. Sam Brownback and even Sen. Arlen Specter, to object that they might well oppose legislation crafted to undercut the GOP in the guise of reform. Even McCain has asked that his name be removed from the legislation (though he will probably support it). Senate Democrats are presumably banking on White House pressure—which will undoubtedly be forthcoming—to whip GOP waverers into line when crucial votes come up. Reportedly the White House already has Sen. Jon Kyl in its sights as a potential ally.

All this, however, suggests that Sessions, now leading the opposition to the bill, will be able to call on substantial GOP support when he takes the field. That support may well include Kyl, a swing figure who helped defeat last year's bill. Here the Senate Democrats may have weakened their hand by overplaying it. Their bill looks likely to be tailored to their partisan interests rather than to bipartisan compromise.

Resistance to illegal immigration is one of the few remaining issues where the GOP now enjoys a clear lead over the Democrats.

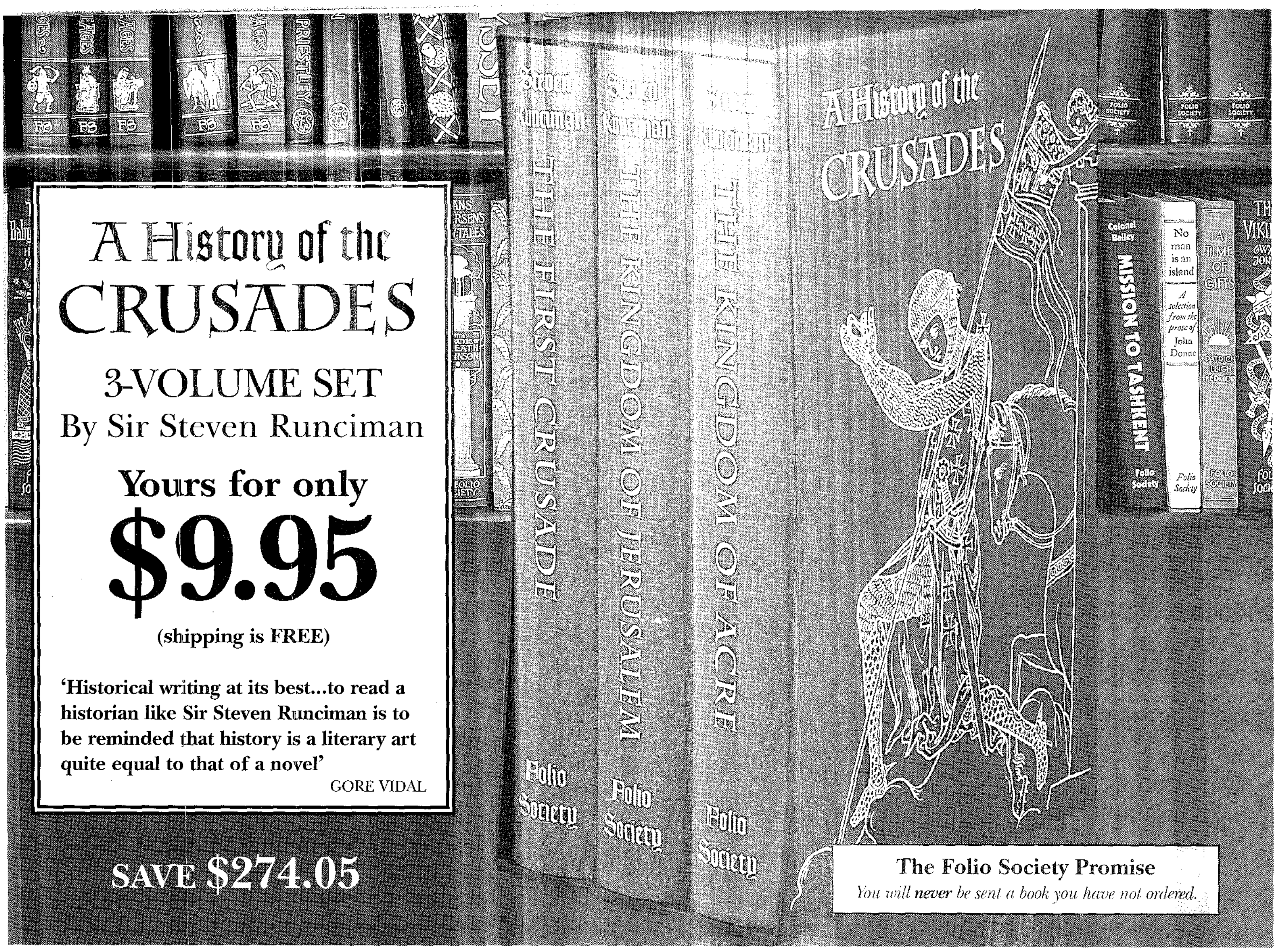
If substantial Senate opposition to the Bush-Democrat bill materializes, it will raise the stakes in the House. House Democratic strategist Rahm Emanuel has reportedly told the White House that the Democratic leadership will throw its full support to the bill only if the GOP delivers between 80 and 90 House votes in its favor. Such crossover support in the House is unlikely if Senate Republicans show anything more than token resistance to White House pressure. It is doubly unlikely if Kennedy, seeking to exploit the president's political weakness and desperate need of a legacy, decides to load up immigration reform with all manner of Democratic gewgaws.

After all, resistance to illegal immigration is one of the few remaining issues where the GOP now enjoys a clear lead over the Democrats. Hence Emanuel's caution. Why should Republicans throw such an issue away to help a lame-duck president who is friendlier to the Democrats than to themselves on many other issues? And if the GOP keeps immigration in play by opposing legislation proposed by Ted Kennedy, why should Emanuel risk the Democrats' new House majority?

If the politics of immigration reform are dangerous to both parties, but more so to the GOP, how about its economic merits? Though there are many aspects to the debate over immigration, the one that most briskly summarizes its overall economic impact is that its benefits to the native-born American population are equal to between $1 billion and $10 billion. That figure has doubtless changed in the decade since the National Academy of Sciences calculated it for the Jordan Commission on immigration reform. Let's be generous and estimate that the net economic benefits of immigration to native-born Americans are now three times as high as the original NAS calculations—thus, between $3 billion and $30 billion. That is a nugatory sum in a multi-*trillion* dollar economy. It is swamped by the far-higher *fiscal* costs of immigration to the U.S. taxpayer. And it has an inegalitarian impact on income distribution, transferring wealth from poorer to richer Americans, which in turn enables the Democrats to win votes on the grounds of wealth inequality. All this—plus the social tensions that uncontrolled immigration inevitably brings in its wake—is a high price to pay for George W. Bush's legacy.

In his second gubernatorial campaign in Texas, Bush ran a Spanish-language ad that proclaimed the benefits, mainly liberal ones, that his first term as governor had brought to Hispanic Americans. It ended with the ringing appeal "Vote Bush—it doesn't matter that he's not a Democrat."

No indeed, not at all. **NR**



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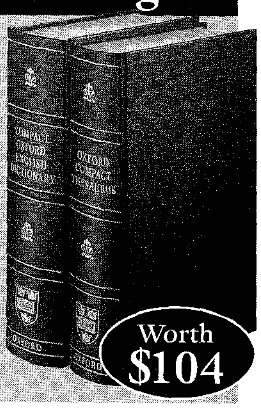

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■ THE NATION

Racial Politics, As Ever

Democrats will be demagogic; when will Republicans counter them?

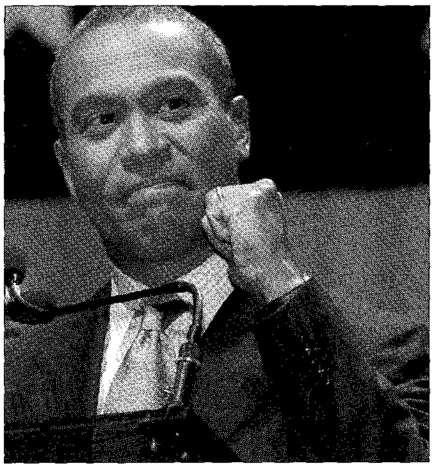
ABIGAIL THERNSTROM

On issues involving race, Republicans are cowards. That's nothing new, but the cost is escalating as the gap between rhetoric and racial reality grows. Racial demagogues on the left set the terms of national debate. Republicans sometimes run for cover, remaining silent in the face of pernicious nonsense; but on other occasions they do much harm, joining forces with those on the left who speak and act as if white racism were still the unconquered enemy.

Here's a taste of the disconnect from reality in the mainstream Democratic camp that evokes not a peep of protest from Republicans. Deval Patrick was inaugurated as Massachusetts's first black governor on January 4. Soon afterward, on Martin Luther King Day, he said: "I wonder how many of us know that in this term, right now, the Supreme Court is seriously considering overruling the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision."

Of course the Supreme Court is not contemplating overturning *Brown*. We await decisions in cases involving racial balancing in Seattle and Jefferson County, Ky., schools. If the petitioners win, the only effect will be to end racial quotas in the assignment of children to schools—at least in some settings. But Governor Patrick knew that his MLK Day speech would validate his moral credentials, put him on the side of the angels, remind voters of what terrible things a Republican administration does—appointing Supreme Court justices who might drag the country back to the days of Jim Crow.

One might think that Republicans would protest against the slander implicit in Patrick's statement. But such statements cost him nothing—and never have. As President Clinton's assistant attorney general for civil rights in the mid-1990s, he was a quota king. In 1994 a *New Republic* article described him as having "committed the Clinton administration to a vision of racial preference that fulfills the most extravagant fantasies of a conservative attack ad." But this was a record that Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, his Republican opponent in last year's gubernatorial race, did not dare mention.



Gov. Deval Patrick (D., Mass.): Will no one push back against him?

ADAM HUNGER/REUTERS

Likewise, members of the Congressional Black Caucus—enjoying unprecedented power in Nancy Pelosi's House—pay no price when they indulge in racially and politically inflammatory rhetoric, much of which targets Republicans.

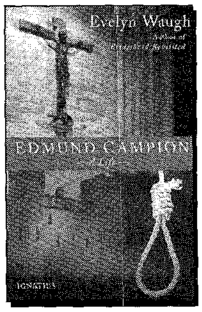
"The Democrats are back, and the CBC is in the lead, in the lead!" Pelosi jubilantly announced on her first day in office as Speaker. Indeed it is. It has 40 members with full House voting privileges (others are delegates whose voting privileges are limited). One of them, James Clyburn, is majority whip; others chair important committees—Judiciary, Ways and Means, Homeland Security, Standards of Official Conduct (Ethics), and House Administration.

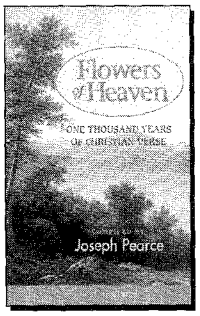
Here's a sampling of some of the CBC members' more interesting statements: Maxine Waters called the the first president Bush a "racist," and the current President Bush a "liar." Mel Watt, Bobby Scott, Elijah Cummings, and Bobby Rush have all charged the administration with botching its response to Katrina precisely because blacks were so hard hit. Chaka Fattah has depicted the president as standing "in front of the schoolhouse door to deny African Americans a higher education." Jesse Jackson Jr. has noted that only 2 percent of the concessionaires at the Baltimore Orioles' stadium are black, from which he has concluded "there is still modern-day slavery on modern-day plantations."

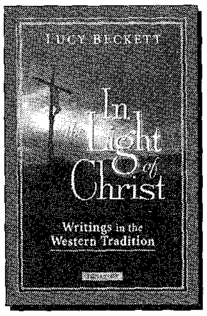
Black *Seattle Times* columnist Lynne K. Varner has asked "whether the [CBC] members can deliver more than a feisty speech to the hometown crowd." That is, in positions of responsibility, will the CBC move closer to the political center, where the majority of American voters are? Not likely. Why should they? For the most part, thanks largely to congressional Republicans, their seats are super-safe. The 1965 Voting Rights Act has ended up forcing states across the nation to engage in race-conscious districting. When district lines are redrawn after every census, the need to protect black and Hispanic incumbents and to create new "opportunity to elect" districts where possible tops the agenda. It's a priority imposed by two provisions in the statute, one of which was renewed by Congress in a lopsided vote this past summer. Moreover, that near-unanimity was spearheaded by Republicans, who were trying to demonstrate civil-rights enthusiasm.

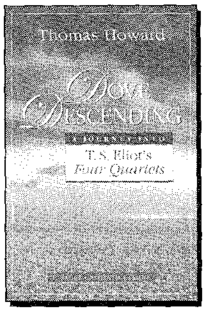
Section 5 of the Act compels seven southern states, Arizona, Texas, and scattered counties elsewhere (including three boroughs of New York City) to submit to the Justice Department all new districting plans for "preclearance"—approval prior to their use in elections. It is a temporary provision that was designed to deal with the emergency of massive black disfranchisement in the South, and was initially expected to expire in 1970. But it has been repeatedly extended, most recently for another 25 years, in the apparent belief that the emergency of disfranchisement (of Hispanics as well as blacks) has proven to be more or less permanent. The provision

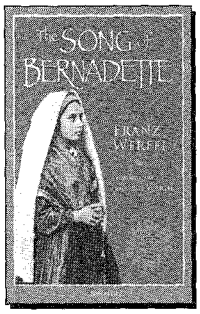
Abigail Thernstrom is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, vice-chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and author of the forthcoming book Voting Rights and Wrongs: The Elusive Quest for Racially Fair Elections.











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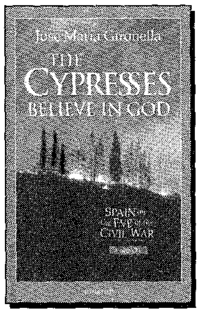

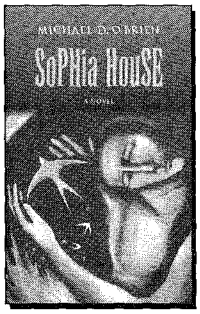

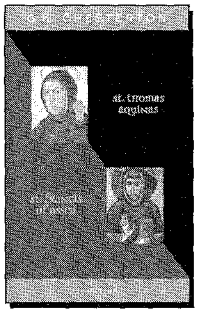

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Section 2 of the Act allows plaintiffs in every state to file suit charging that a districting plan has a discriminatory "result." As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor acknowledged in 1986, this provision has created a right to roughly proportional racial and ethnic representation, minimally constrained by Fourteenth Amendment limits on race-driven public policies.

The process of drawing districting maps is inevitably politically complicated; it involves the weighing of numerous competing considerations. The last thing state legislators want is to end up with a map thrown out by the Justice Department or a federal court. Thus, not only in the jurisdictions of the South and elsewhere covered by Section 5, but in every state with significant numbers of blacks and Hispanics, lawmakers will protect themselves against a voting-rights dispute by creating a maximum number of safe minority legislative seats.

Section 2 is a permanent part of the Act, and it would take the bravest of politicians to suggest it should be repealed or even rewritten. But Section 5 would have expired in 2007 if Congress and the administration, in a panic about Republican civil-rights credentials, had not rushed to reauthorize it.

Only ten out of the 40 CBC members have been elected from Section 5 jurisdictions. Another 13 have won in majority-black districts that are not the product of Justice Department preclearance enforcement, while the remaining 17 have been elected from districts that are actually minority-black. It would be a mistake, however, to see any of the CBC districts as unrelated to the pressures created by the Voting Rights Act to create race-based constituencies. The majority-black districts not under the thumb of Section 5 actually protect the states from Section 2 suits. Their boundaries are clearly race-conscious.

Likewise, the minority-black districts serve as safeguards against charges of electoral discrimination as defined by Section 2. When states cannot find a sufficient number of black residents to form a majority-minority constituency, they have compensated sometimes by including substantial numbers of Hispanics in the district and almost always by running after every possible minority resident with boundaries that wander across the landscape with total abandon. North Carolina 12, which Melvin Watt represents, was the most litigated district in the country in the 1990s and remains, as Michael Barone describes it, a "snake-like agglomeration" that includes black voters in or near six cities in the state. All these districts are litigation-proof; the states have done everything they can to ensure black representatives for black voters.

Someday, perhaps, a majority in Congress will decide that the emergency of black and Hispanic disfranchisement is over and Section 5 is no longer needed. And perhaps, too, it will conclude that Section 2, unless revised, does more harm than good. Until that time, the race-driven districts that are the product of the Voting Rights Act will continue to elect representatives who peddle racial grievance and stand at the far left of the political spectrum.

The statute—and Republican commitment to it—has created a political culture in which it's assumed that black voters must be represented by blacks in office. It's a poisonous message, reinforcing the notion that blacks are . . . well, different from whites. Individual identity is defined by race—precisely the notion that the civil-rights movement fought so hard against. It's a vicious circle because underscoring racial differences only deepens the central problem of African Americans today: their alienation from the norms and vision of the mainstream culture.

Most Americans understand the reality of enormous black progress over the last half century. They know it's 2007, not 1965 in Mississippi. And yet Republicans have joined Democrats in drawing a very different portrait: an America frozen in time, with blacks still needing the federal protection devised in the mid-1960s. With their commitment to race-based districting ("political apartheid," Justice O'Connor once called it) and their picture of persistent white racism, Democrats and their allies in the civil-rights community have turned their back on the old values and optimism of the civil-rights movement. Shame on Republicans for doing so as well: America needs the GOP to do what the Democrats won't, and speak up for a genuine civil-rights vision. **NR**

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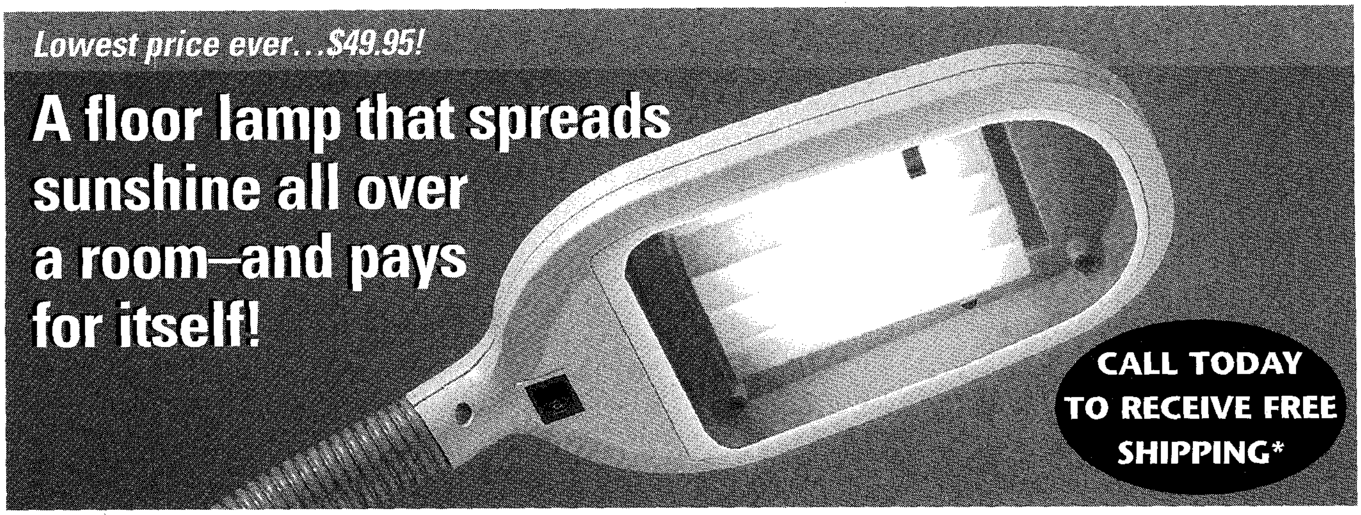
This has led to calls in Congress for various executive-compensation reforms, ranging from eliminating tax deductibility for deferred benefits above $1 million, to requiring specific shareholder votes on executive compensation, to setting actual limits on the maximum ratio of CEO to worker pay.

While the energy behind a lot of these proposals arises from the fear that the recent run-up in CEO pay is being created by a bunch of insiders rigging the game, it's not only crypto-socialists who get queasy when they see a CEO get a $200 million payout the same day that he's fired for incompetence. The current chairman of the Federal Reserve and his immediate predecessor, as well as the current secretary of the Treasury, have all highlighted growing income inequality as a serious issue.

Peter Drucker, who holds oracular status for thoughtful businessmen, is always cited by proponents of reduced executive compensation, because he argued for limiting the pay of any CEO to no more than 25 times that of the lowest paid of the

Mr. Manzi is the CEO of an applied-artificial-intelligence software company.



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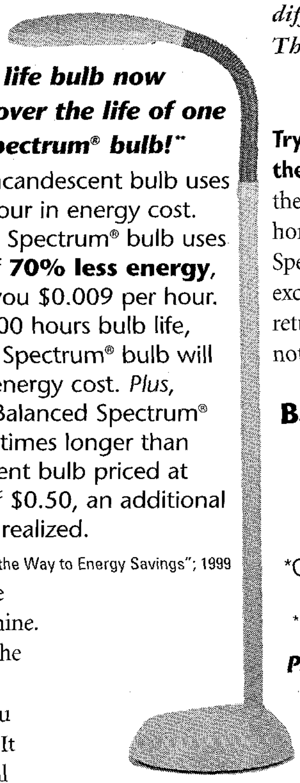
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company's workers. But it's instructive to go back and read Drucker's explanation for high CEO paychecks, back in 1977: "Every executive knows perfectly well that it is the internal logic of a hierarchical structure that explains them. The foreman has to get $15,000 after fringes or $20,000 including fringes. And each level above the foreman has to get at least 40 percent more, it is believed. If there are 30 levels, then the top man has to get $500,000 plus."

Which is quaint: From the use of a factory foreman as the standard example of a front-line supervisor, to the idea that there are 30 levels in a large company, it reads like something from a time capsule. Relying on Drucker from 1977 for guidance on reforming executive pay is like relying on Trollope for guidance on reforming Parliament. At some level of abstraction the insights about human nature are eternal, but the circumstances on the ground have changed so much that the practical proposals are no longer relevant.

Drucker's basic argument was that CEO compensation had to be set so high because there were so many levels between the shop floor and the CEO. But over the past 30 years new information technology and management practices have removed large swaths of middle management. There are many fewer layers between the CEO and the lowest-level worker in a typical public corporation today than in 1977; by Drucker's logic, this should have led to a partial convergence of CEO and "foreman" pay. So why has the reverse occurred?

Think back to the bureaucratic, inward-looking, and risk-averse corporate world of 30 years ago; it's important to remember just how bad it was. The Soviet Union was still seen as a realistic economic competitor in the 1970s, and there was widespread speculation throughout the 1980s that the U.S. could not compete with Japan and the rest of Asia. Continental Europe was held up as a model of developed-economy success.

If the U.S. of that time wanted to escape economic stagnation, the corporation of that time had to go. As I started my business career in the mid-1980s I had a ringside seat for the titanic struggle to reform American business. While an economy is constantly evolving, there was an economic Twenty Years' War that began in roughly 1980; by 2000 it was largely complete, and we now live in the new economy that it created. This wasn't a pretty struggle. It was trench warfare to force corporations to be more aggressive, entrepreneurial, and risk-taking, and it was fought out one company at a time. Change was fiercely resisted by incumbent managers, who often draped their resistance in appeals to tradition, corporate loyalty, or the public interest.

A lot of money was made by those with the wit, audacity, and stamina to force these changes. When successful, both the entrepreneurs who started new challenger companies and the partners in leveraged-buyout firms who bought control positions in existing companies became very rich. This process also created enormous financial risks and opportunities for management teams that were willing to transform companies. Ironically, by focusing on maximizing shareholder value in order to increase personal wealth, they did the hard work on the reforms that have renewed the American economy's overall position as the envy of the world. It was the invisible hand in action.

In the contemporary American context, attempts to directly control the price of executive labor always backfire.

The implicit compensation paradigm in this new environment relies on markets rather than corporate diktats to set pay, accepts a much higher degree of income disparity based on market-denominated performance, and expects that most people will exploit the resulting market for talent by moving between companies many times during a career. The practical implications of this for compensation in the upper reaches of the American economy are staggering.

The astronomical incomes of professional athletes are often cited as a justification for high CEO pay, but this seems pretty fatuous: A typical budding executive does not really decide between an MBA and the NBA. But he often does decide between a career in business operations and one in investment banking, management consulting, or corporate law. The median Forbes 500 CEO, i.e., the 250th highest paid CEO among the 500 biggest U.S. public companies, made about $5.5 million in 2005. A successful senior partner in a management-consulting or corporate-law firm today makes about $1 to $2 million per year. A senior investment banker makes more: Last year the average partner at Goldman Sachs made more than $5 million. The take-home pay of a partner in a good private-equity firm or hedge fund makes all of these numbers seem like lunch money. The 400th highest paid public-company CEO in America makes about $2 million per year, but the 400th richest American is a billionaire.

There are several other factors driving the rapid recent increase in CEO pay: the deployment of new technologies, the growth in the size of the average public company, the increasing concentration of power in the CEO role, changes in tax policy, and so forth. Changes in some of these factors could reduce the pay gap between the CEO and the average worker. But seen in the context of the relevant job market, millions of dollars of annual income is what it takes to attract the right talent for the job.

It's because of this that, in the contemporary American context, attempts to directly control the price of executive labor always backfire. When Congress limited tax deductibility for cash compensation above $1 million, many companies simply increased the proportion of compensation delivered in the form of options. Options are now the primary element in most of the mega-payouts to CEOs. When corporate reformers tried to shame corporate boards by publicizing the highest paid CEOs, the CEOs reacted by being even more competitive with one another—and this drove up CEO pay even further. These reformers misunderstood the current world of executive compensation. Markets don't respond to shame, only to incentives.

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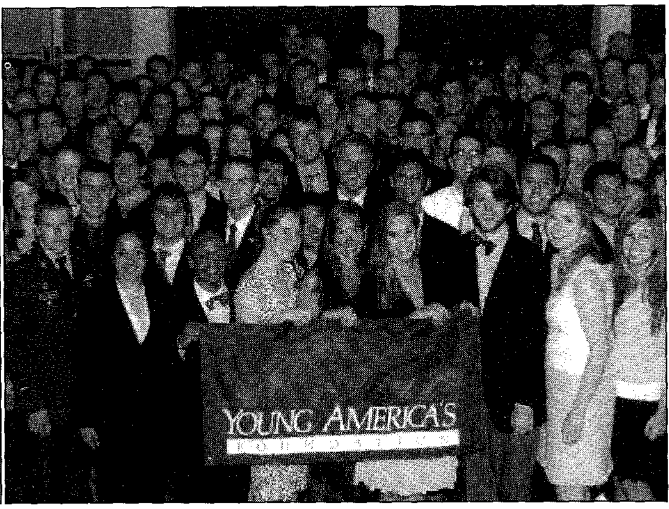

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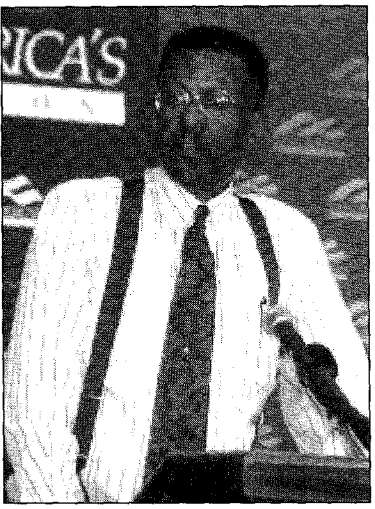

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worker pay gap would require unwinding the whole new world of pay-for-performance that has created disproportionate income gains for the winners across the U.S. economy. To which populist critics say, basically, "Exactly": The real point of this whole movement is to repeal the 1980s. The problem, of course, is that this would likely create greater equality within an economy that could not grow—and not many Americans really want to trade our economy for Germany's.

But to say that this cure would be worse than the disease is not to imply that all's well in the new, market-based world of executive compensation. Markets are unsentimental about forcing change, and they are efficient at directing resources to their highest and best use, but for the participants they are a school for selfishness. Unbridled compensation markets consume a kind of social capital that any real company, or society, requires for success: solidarity with others and identification with a cause greater than self.

The real challenge is to achieve the economic performance that the market ethos enables without undermining the culture that enables the market. While no economic arrangement is permanent, we will probably be living with a high ratio of CEO to worker pay for a long time. Measures extreme enough to be effective in reducing CEO pay would be self-destructive. Fortunately, the CEO-to-worker ratio is not a very good summary measure of what creates feelings of inequity. More important to most people are: (1) the growth rate of their income, (2) the security of their standard of living, and (3) a belief that the game is not rigged against them. A practical political program should focus on these issues.

We live in an imperfect world, and life will always be to some degree unfair. Luckily, mature adults understand this, and intuitively accept the implication that in practical life the perfect is often the enemy of the good. The political salience of a voodoo-doll issue like CEO pay will rapidly wither if we focus on providing some baseline security, and on ensuring that a wealth of opportunities remain realistically available to a substantial majority of the population. **NR**

PUBLIC POLICY II

Corporate-Welfare Queens (and Kings)

Google, American Express, Dollar Tree . . .

JOHN J. MILLER

MONEY doesn't grow on trees, but that hasn't stopped Dollar Tree Stores from generating forests of revenue. In 2006, sales at the retail chain, where every item costs a buck, were $4 billion. That's up 17 percent from the year before. The company now operates more than 3,200 stores around the country, as compared with just over 2,900 a year ago—an increase of more than one per weekday last year.

So this capitalist success story is an obvious candidate for a taxpayer subsidy, right?

That's what Virginia thinks. On February 12, Democratic governor Tim Kaine announced his plan to award $200,000 in state money to Dollar Tree for an expansion of its corporate headquarters in Chesapeake. The cash comes out of something called the Governor's Opportunity Fund, which spends more than $15 million per year on companies that seek financial help. "We view it as a deal-closing fund," says Christie Miller of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, a state agency. "It's for attracting business to Virginia and keeping it here, too."

Giveaways to flourishing companies may not sound like a discount-store bargain for taxpayers, but they're standard operating procedure just about everywhere. Even local governments are getting in the act: The city of Chesapeake agreed to inject $200,000 of its own money into Dollar Tree's project. Around the country, this marriage of Big Government and Big Business carries a price tag of $50 billion each year, according to an estimate by Alan Peters and Peter Fisher of the University of Iowa. For the most part, however, these so-called business incentives "don't accomplish much of anything," says Peters.

That's not entirely true. They can accomplish quite a bit for politicians such as Kaine, who wasted no time in issuing a boastful press release about his Dollar Tree deal: "Governor Kaine Announces 100 New Jobs for Chesapeake." Yet these little exercises in industrial policy rarely drive economic growth. And sometimes they aren't so little: Last summer, then-governor George Pataki of New York, a Republican, approved a $1.2 billion package of grants and tax reductions for AMD to build a microchip factory in Saratoga County. The project is supposed to create 1,200 jobs, which works out to a price of $1 million apiece for New York taxpayers—a deal that might make even George Steinbrenner blush.

Perhaps these corporate-welfare schemes would be worth it if they created more jobs, helped depressed areas, or expanded a region's tax base. Evidence suggests that they don't accomplish any of these goals. "After decades of policy experimentation and literally hundreds of scholarly studies, none of these claims is clearly substantiated," wrote Peters and Fisher in their exhaustive analysis. "Indeed . . . there is a good chance that all of these claims are false."

This should come as no surprise. Politicians and bureaucrats in the grip of what Hayek called the "fatal conceit"—the notion that they can pick economic winners and losers better than the invisible hand of the market—have an exceedingly poor track record. The Mackinac Center, a think tank in Michigan, analyzed the performance of the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA), the state's most visible corporate-subsidy program. It found that among 127 deals whose employment promises were fully measurable through 2004, only 10 had met their projections. "MEGA is another in a long line of political programs disguised as economic ones," says Michael D. LaFaive, a co-author of the study. "They're great for giving politicians cover but do little to produce real job growth."

Despite these failures, economic-development agencies have enjoyed indis-

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Recently the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level." Representing a consensus of hundreds of scientists, the report went on to note that human activity is "very likely" the cause.

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The Evidence Mounts

The Muir Glacier, a large tidewater glacier in Muir Inlet in Alaska, retreated more than 4 miles in the 1970's and 1980's alone.

Like many scientific problems, the gradual assembly of a detailed picture of past, present, and future climates has involved creative detective work. For example, scientists traditionally test their theories by changing different variables, but this has not been possible with theories about climate change on Earth for two reasons: It's unwise to transform the planet just to see what will happen, and there are not multiple Earths to serve as test subjects. However, you'll see that researchers have been able to identify cases where nature has done the experiments.

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Dr. Richard Wolfson is the Benjamin F. Wissler Professor of Physics at Middlebury College, where he also teaches Climate Change in Middlebury's Environmental Studies Program. He completed his undergraduate work at MIT and Swarthmore College, graduating from Swarthmore with a double major in Physics and Philosophy. He holds a master's in Environmental Studies from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in Physics from Dartmouth.

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putable success in one area: rewarding businesses for making choices they would likely have made anyway. The decision to build a factory or open an office is a complex one, as businesses weigh the availability of workers, access to transportation, proximity to consumers, the quality of local schools, and so on. Unless they're truly massive, these subsidies play almost no role in what companies decide to do.

Was Dollar Tree thinking seriously about moving its headquarters out of Virginia? Almost certainly not. Its roots have been firmly planted in the Old Dominion's soil for more than two decades. Moreover, the headquarters expansion was a done deal even before Kaine decided to throw money at it. "Dollar Tree was already clearing trees from the site," says Scott Howell, a development manager for the city of Chesapeake.

Brin and Page, the Google founders: Do they need government assistance?

RALPH ORLOWSKI/GETTY

Similarly, in the wake of 9/11, the federal government devoted $500 million to the cause of persuading companies to remain in lower Manhattan. American Express alone pocketed $25 million, but this was money wasted. "Our decision to return downtown, which has been our home for more than 150 years, was not predicated on financial incentives," said spokesman Tony Mitchell, according to *Newsday*. "Once those financial incentives became available, we chose to participate, as did other companies."

Although these giveaway programs don't appear to be engines of employment, they have created a new kind of job: the site-location specialist. In truth, these consultants have been around for a while, and they have a legitimate role to play. Growing companies often need expert advice on where and how they might relocate or expand. Increasingly, however, these consultants are expected to grab public money.

Sometimes site specialists operate like lawyers on contingency, taking a percentage of the subsidies they win for their clients. They can certainly be flamboyant. A few years ago, the John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh, N.C.–based think tank, reported on an Ernst & Young presentation at the annual conference of the State Government Affairs Council, an association of corporate government-relations officers. The seminar was called "Turn Your State Government Relations Department from a Money Pit into a Cash Cow." It urged listeners to deliver a "'but for' threat"—i.e., to insist that "but for" government incentives, they wouldn't be able to expand or move their businesses. That particular piece of advice is difficult to interpret as something other than an inducement to lie.

Last summer, Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat, announced that Google would open an office in Ann Arbor. At the time, the company's stock-market capitalization was valued at more than $100 billion. Yet Granholm granted $38 million in tax credits to the robust company, relief not bestowed on other companies. Would Google have chosen Michigan "but for" the financial assistance? Press reports suggest that Google co-founder Larry Page, a Michigan native who earned a degree at the University of Michigan, was determined to build in Ann Arbor regardless.

Granholm, for her part, was thrilled to pose as a creator of high-tech jobs. The state Democratic party ran advertisements on her supposed achievement: Granholm was in the midst of a tough reelection campaign and had to battle the stubborn fact that her state was one of only two in the country that lost jobs during her first term (the other was Louisiana, which could blame Hurricane Katrina). It would appear that Granholm's decision to aid Google had more to do with protecting her incumbency than helping Michigan.

But that's nothing new. Public officials have long believed that with the right kind of industrial policy they can take credit for igniting technology booms. Yet as Scott Wallsten of the Progress and Freedom Foundation has demonstrated in his county-by-county research, the efforts to create biotech hubs and research parks haven't paid off. "They make great press releases," he says. "On average, however, they don't contribute to a region's economic growth."

Free-market purists aren't the only ones who oppose the subsidies. A 2004 report by Good Jobs First, a labor-backed policy group, objected to the more than $1 billion in state and local subsidies for Wal-Mart's stores and distribution centers. The subsidies can take many forms, including assistance with land purchases, property-tax abatements, and outright cash grants. "Wal-Mart is a huge company that's doing very well," says Greg LeRoy, the executive director of Good Jobs First and author of *The Great American Jobs Scam*. "It makes no sense for any government to bankroll its growth."

Even if certain elements of the Left and Right can find common cause in opposing corporate welfare, they may have trouble agreeing on how the money should be spent. Many liberals would like to divert the funds for different expenditures, while conservatives would prefer to return the money to the public in the form of lower taxes.

Still, there are signs of rapprochement: Last year, LeRoy spoke at the Heritage Foundation on a Supreme Court case involving tax credits that Ohio gave to automaker giant Chrysler. Conservatives and liberals can possibly agree on a few basics, such as better disclosure and reporting on exactly how much money states and localities spend to assist corporations. "It's very hard to keep track of all the different programs in a single state, let alone everywhere," says Peters of the University of Iowa. "Sometimes I think that they make it impossible to track because the information would be so embarrassing."

Research in this area is probably one activity the politicians aren't willing to fund. **NR**

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THE UNFREE WORLD

Youth with Unfathomable Courage

An independent news agency in Cuba

JAY NORDLINGER

ONE day toward the end of last year, Liannis Meriño Aguilera took her mom to the hospital. And it seemed to State Security a good time to seize Liannis and threaten her. They took her to the psychiatric ward, telling her to cease her reports on the country's health-care system, or face awful consequences. A psychologist warned her that she could be labeled mentally ill—adding that people who tell the truth about the country simply have to be crazy.

Liannis will not quite concede this point. "No," she says, "those of us who denounce the government and tell the truth are very clear in our thoughts. We want human rights to be upheld, and we want democratic change."

As you may possibly have surmised, Liannis Meriño is an independent journalist in Cuba, making her one of the bravest people on earth. She is the director of Jóvenes sin Censura, or Youth Without Censorship, a news agency. Liannis has written a piece called "To Be an Independent Journalist Is to Flirt with Death." And that is what these people do every day.

According to Reporters Without Borders, Cuba is the fourth-worst place in the world for journalists—the worst are North Korea, Turkmenistan, and Eritrea (in that order). Cuba has an official press, and everything else is illegal. The regime greatly fears and persecutes any peep of independence. In the crackdown of March 2003—known as "Black Spring"—27 journalists were arrested. Some have been released, even as others have been put away. There are now about 25 journalists in prison. And anyone who remains on the outside is constantly harassed, constantly disrupted, doing that dance with death.

Also, they work without the basic tools of the trade: a computer, the Internet. Often they don't have phones, because State Security rips them away. In addition to being brave, independent journalists in Cuba have to be more resourceful than anyone else.

Raúl Rivero is a well-known poet and journalist, once a political prisoner; he is now in exile, in Spain. He talked to the *Miami Herald* about his days in Cuba: "Whenever a foreign journalist came to interview or visit me and said, 'What can I do for you?' I would answer, 'Leave me your pen.'"

Under Castro, independent journalists are called American stooges, enemies of the people, and so on. Besides being subject to constant surveillance, they are subject to *actos de repudio*, or "acts of repudiation." This is when the government has a mob surround your house and throw stones at it, or beat up you and your family. The intimidation is fierce. And this warns others to stay away from you. Liannis Meriño, while she was in that psychiatric ward, was threatened with *actos de repudio*.

And the government can do far worse, of course: They can abduct you, torture you, or "disappear" you.

Liannis Meriño is an independent journalist in Cuba, making her one of the bravest people on earth.

Independent journalists have been brought up on a variety of charges, and they have been imprisoned on no charges at all. Formal charges include "spreading false news against international peace," "putting in danger the prestige or credit of the Cuban State," and (my favorite) being "a pre-criminal danger to society." This last means that the individual has committed no formal offense, but simply makes the regime nervous. As Reporters Without Borders says, "the charge is often used to detain dissidents."

And yet, in the face of all this, Cuban independent news agencies keep at it. There are many, most of them very small, all of them incredibly daring. It is often unclear why some journalists are arrested while others remain at large. And, when one journalist is arrested, or vanishes, another one tends to take over. For example, last November, Raymundo Perdigón Brito and his sister, Margarita, started an agency called Yayabo Press. Twelve days later, he was carted off, and Margarita carried on.

Here in America, or wherever access to the Internet is allowed, one can read the work of independent journalists on various websites—at CubaNet.org, for instance, or PayoLibre.com, or Directorio.org. The third of these is the site of the Directorio Democrático Cubano, in Miami. CubaNet takes as its motto a statement from José Martí, the Cuban independence hero: "Only oppression should fear the full exercise of freedom." As for Cubans themselves, they may hear independent reports over Radio Martí or Radio República, where they are read.

Liannis Meriño embodies the spirit of democratic resistance, and the desire for truth. She is both tough-minded and impossibly idealistic. I talk to her by phone one afternoon, through the good offices of supporters in the United States. It is her twenty-third birthday. The words gush out of Liannis, articulately, and there is an urgency to her voice.

She relates that Youth Without Censorship was founded in 2005, by human-rights activists—including the heroic Juan Carlos González Leiva, a blind lawyer. They now have reporters all over the island, 16 in all.

Liannis began this work because, as she says, "in a totalitarian system, the people don't have access to information, and the regime can do or say anything it wants. It doesn't want anything brought to light." She explains that, "between Cuba and the world, the regime has built a wall. And we have not been able to penetrate that wall to communicate with the world. The government wants people to think Cuba is a paradise. That is not the case."

The young woman has been detained or jailed many times, and I ask whether she is afraid of something worse. She says, "Yes, sometimes—but the desire to work

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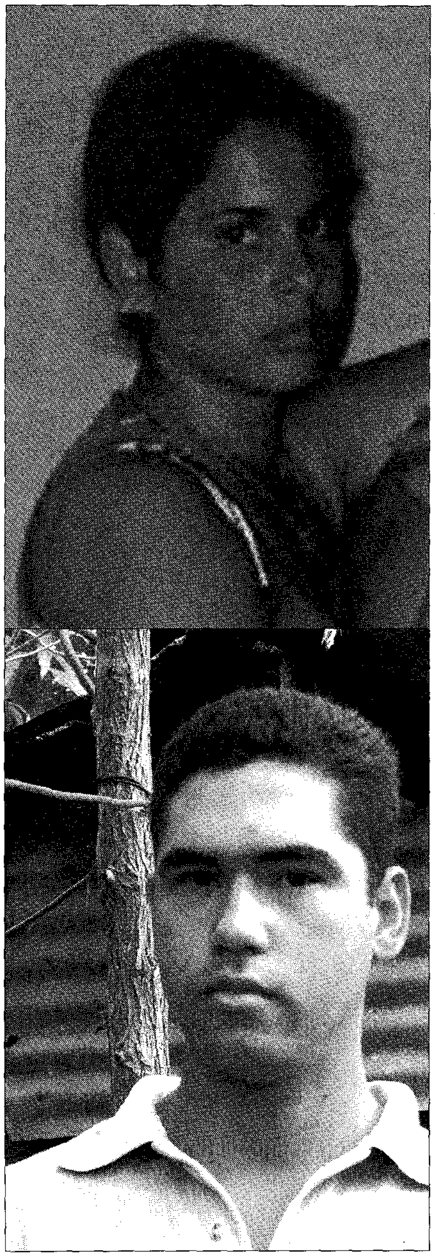
for my country, and to inform people, is bigger than any oppression. I see what the civic movements are doing, and that inspires me to keep going. If I have to go to prison, it will be unjust, but not in vain."

She has never been a conformist, has never been submissive, and was expelled from her university for "collaborating" with unauthorized organizations—human-rights groups. In January, she was detained by State Security after reporting on the firing of two young men from a cigar factory for homosexuality. The agents said, "Why do you defend these people?" Liannis replied matter-of-factly, "We defend the rights of all people, no matter who they are." She would also report decent acts by the government, if she could find any. Liannis represents a rare journalistic integrity.

Her mom and dad are "extremely scared" for her, because "they know what the government is capable of doing." But she has much support in her family and community, and knows that people are grateful, whether they can say so or not. With González Leiva, she has started a magazine called *Amanecer* (meaning "dawn"). And she and her colleagues will start another one whose name is the same as their group's: *Jóvenes sin Censura*. The magazine will be clandestine, of course, and who knows what will happen to it? It will not be heavily political, either: It will have entertainment news, a crossword puzzle—it will be a place where "people can be free," says Liannis.

I ask whether she has heroes, and she says it is the Cuban people themselves who inspire her: "people who are suffering, who have to hide in their homes out of fear, who need a voice." Mainly, she says, "my trust is in God," whom she carries "deep in my heart."

All the journalists in prison have demonstrated huge courage, and their cases should be known—well-known. One of the most remarkable is that of Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta. He is in Kilo 8 Prison, in the province of Camagüey. Like many others, he is kept in the most vile of conditions: surrounded by violent criminals, denied medical care, perpetually abused. One day in December, he took the extreme step—this is hard to understand outside the context of a totalitarian society—of sewing his mouth shut. The news was reported by a member of Youth Without Censorship, Luis Esteban Espinosa.



Liannis Meriño Aguilera and Luis Esteban Espinosa

Some days later, Luis Esteban himself was arrested. He was beaten up by State Security, but, luckily, not imprisoned. He was merely detained for a couple of hours—and warned to quit his independent activities, lest a worse fate befall him.

But Luis Esteban has not quit, and I talk to him the same day I talk with Liannis Meriño, and via the same means. Luis Esteban is all of 20. Over the phone, he sounds impossibly youthful, but, as with Liannis, his voice burns with conviction and determination. He began this work at 18. He feels a particular commitment to "keep an eye on what happens to political prisoners," so that the world does not forget them entirely. He has very few materials, but extremely supportive parents.

And, like everybody else in his business, he knows full well that he could be "incarcerated or 'disappeared,'" as he says—State Security has threatened this many times. They have also tried to turn him, which is to say, have tried to make him an informant on his colleagues. This is standard operating procedure for State Security.

Naturally, Luis Esteban is uncertain about the future. But he hopes one day to live in a "free and changed Cuba," where he can work as a journalist under conditions the rest of us enjoy. "A human being has the right to express himself," he says—even in Cuba. And what does he wish Americans could know? "They should be more informed about the government's repression. We have no freedom here. People should support the dissidents. It's very important to know that there are people who care, who are watching."

I always feel a bit strange, when I get off the phone with such people, and resume the comfortable life. I wonder what will become of them—and whether I would have the spine and heart to act as they do, in similar circumstances. In preparing this piece, I talked to a woman who was trying to say how much she admired Youth Without Censorship: "They're so brave, so amazing, so good . . ." After sputtering for a bit, she said, with some embarrassment, "I'm sorry, I don't have the words." I know exactly how she feels.

But I can say this—I can share an observation. When independent journalists, dissidents, and other such people talk, one theme keeps coming up: love. They talk about their love of country, love of their neighbors, love of God. An independent journalist named Aini Martín Valero recently gave an interview to an American journalist, Marc Masferrer. She said, "I write my articles, news, chronicles, etc., with much love, because with my reports, I help people understand the Cuban reality."

It may not be normal to link journalism and love, but such a link exists. **NR**

CULTURE WATCH

The Story of Anna Nicole

A typical American second act

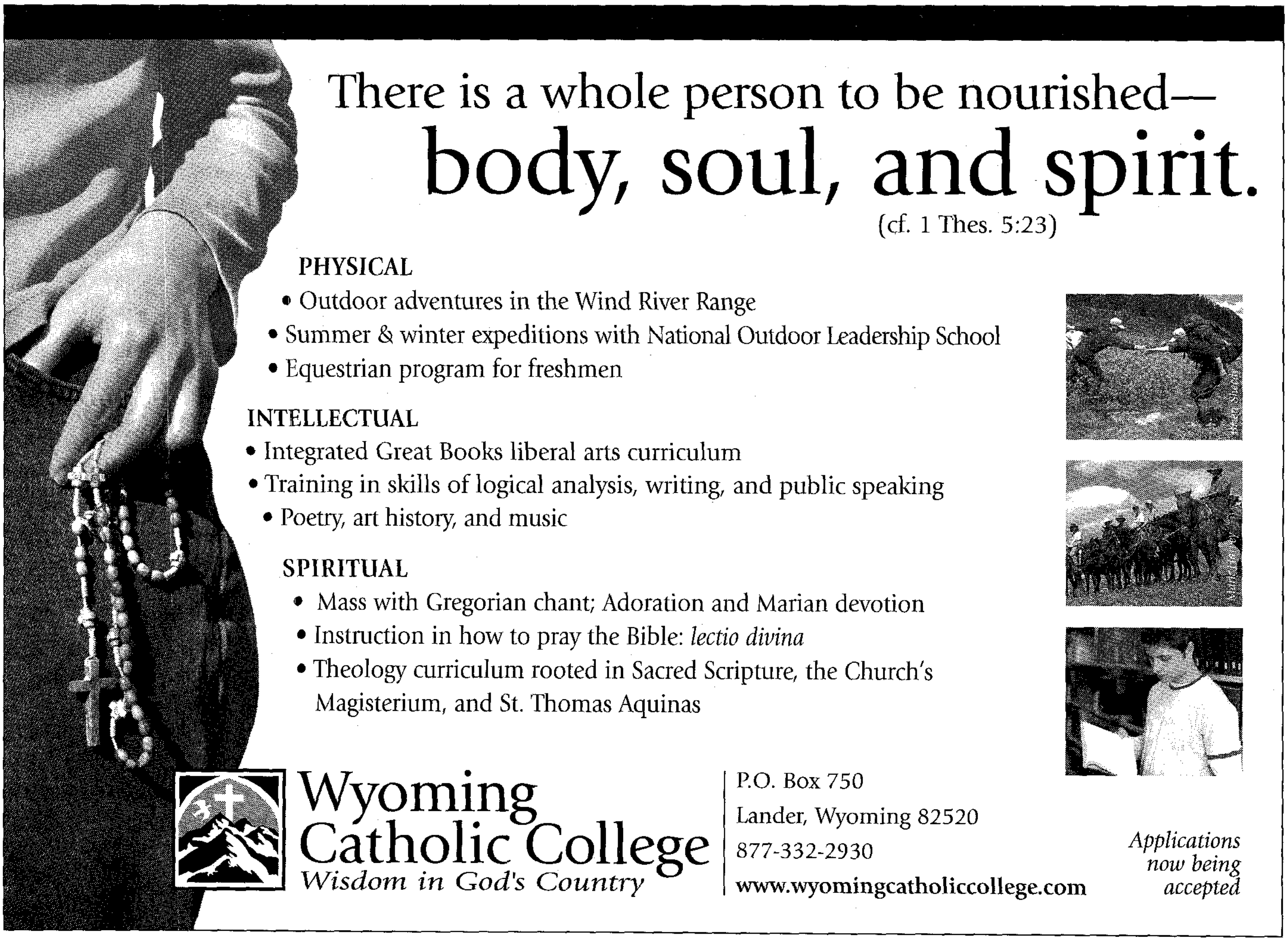
ROB LONG

SOMEWHERE around the time Broward County circuit judge Larry Seidlin began weeping, inexplicably, as he read his decision in the Anna Nicole Smith case, I thought to myself, "What are we fighting so hard for? Let the terrorists win. They have a point."

Of course, I wondered why the judge was crying at all. It seemed like a pretty routine court procedure—rich lady dies; confusion abounds; judge steps in to clear it up—but for some reason, Judge Seidlin took it all very personally. On the other hand, after weeks of idiotic wall-to-wall coverage of the death of a minor celebrity, we were all feeling a little bit punchy. I confess to a giddy, lightheaded feeling when I heard that she had named her infant daughter something called "Dannielynn."

Let's get this all out of the way: Anna Nicole Smith was a freakish oddity, one of those creatures who bounce through the pachinko game of life and somehow end up on the front page. Because she was beautiful, she became a model. Because she became a model, she captured the attention of a Texas oil tycoon. Because the Texas oil tycoon was 89 years old, she became an heiress. Because she became an heiress, she ended up in probate court. Then she got fat. Then she got skinny. Then she got her own reality show. Then she died. Then she ended up back in probate court. And now she has her own reality show again, this time as an off-screen star, which is something to be grateful for.

Among the many, many stupid things F. Scott Fitzgerald said, surely the stupidest is, "There are no second acts in American lives." The second act of a play (or, more popularly, a movie) is the time of conflict and transformation, when the main characters face up to some major challenge (Who is the father of my child? Or, Should we invade Iraq? Or, Should I make a move on that White House intern?) and find themselves and their circumstances transformed. The great thing about American lives—and American culture—is their capacity for transformation. We pick up and move west. We start over. We build new. We get born again. We shave our head, like Britney Spears. We move to the right, like Hillary Clinton, circa 2002. We suddenly win Oscars, like Al Gore. American lives are almost entirely made up of second acts—even our first acts are second acts. Even our last acts—as we see in the Anna Nicole Smith case, with her corpse bouncing from jurisdic-



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(cf. 1 Thes. 5:23)

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tion to jurisdiction—are second acts.

How did this messy, capricious creature flop herself onto our television screens and newspapers? Well, for one thing, she was pretty busy. One aspect of the legal conflict is determining who, exactly, is the biological father of her newborn baby daughter, the swellegantly named Dannielynn. It could be Howard K. Stern, her live-in boyfriend. Or it could be a certain Larry Birkhead. Or—and this is what got my attention—it could be someone named Prince von Anhalt, who is Zsa Zsa Gabor's husband. Or was. It's hard to know for certain whether Zsa Zsa is still alive.

"It's all going to come down to DNA," a guy said, to no one in particular. We were sitting about six seats apart, in the departure lounge of a United Airlines flight from LAX, and CNN was blaring the latest details of the case from a TV bolted to the ceiling. I pretended to fiddle with my iPod. "Yep," he said, stretching out a bit, "good thing they got those tissue samples." Here's another way America has changed: Since the O. J. Simpson murders, Monica's dress, and the premiere of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, we've all become experts in the field of forensic science.

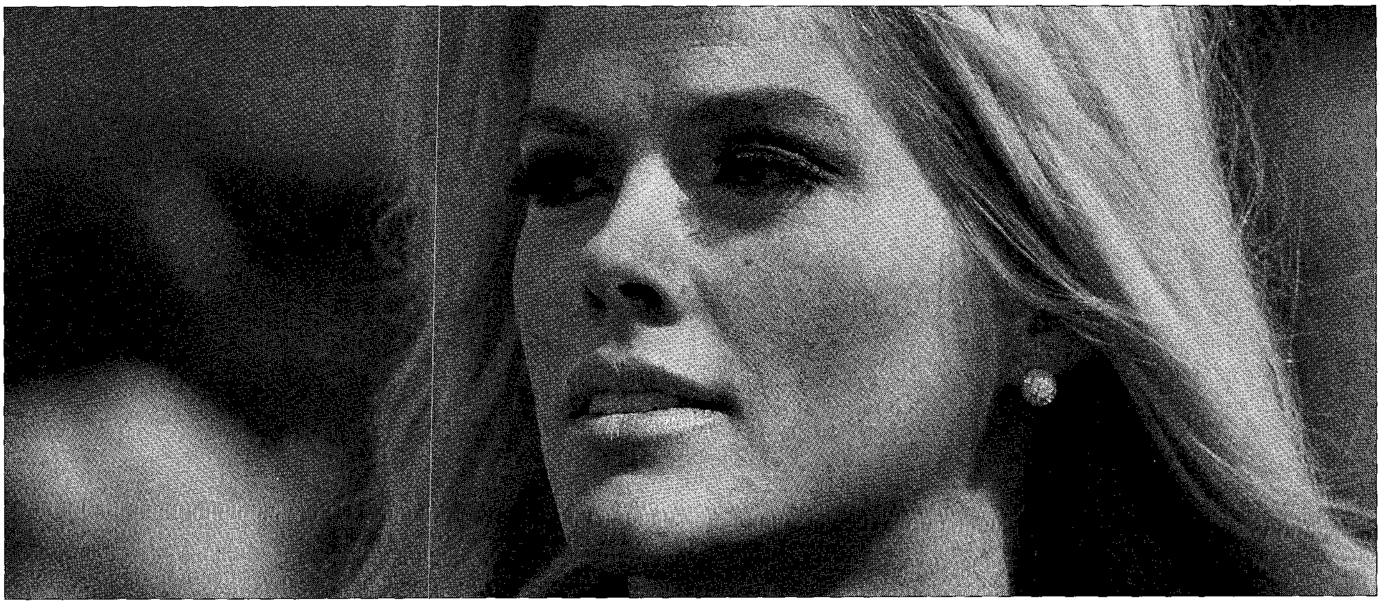
It was a pretty tasteful crowd in that lounge, waiting for the next shuttle to San Francisco, and if you had asked any of them what they thought of the case, or of Anna Nicole, or of the name Dannielynn, I'm certain you'd have heard some tut-tuts and squirms of disapproval. "Why are we watching this?" you would have heard. "Who cares?" they all would have said. "I don't even know who she is," someone would have said.

They'd be lying, of course. One of the signs of a healthy society, it seems to me, is its hypocritical relationship to its own prurient foolishness—the healthier, the more hypocritical. Are we interested in a case that involves a zaftig, dead fashion model, hundreds of millions of dollars, child custody, a weeping judge, Prince von Anhalt, East Texas, a little baby named Dannielynn, the Bahamas, and diet pills? Of course we are! And shouldn't we be? Look, if that's not enough to get you to look up from your Quizno's sub and watch Nancy Grace, then, man, you've got problems with your priorities.

Good taste, though, requires that we pretend otherwise. Good taste—or, more precisely, the current journalistic definition of good taste—means that, interspersed between courtroom cutaways and live, corpse-side reports, we have to listen to pundits, gathered in glum little clumps, wondering aloud on Anderson Cooper's show whether we're not spending too much time worrying about a rich dead lady and her baby and the zany details of her life. Shouldn't we be talking about Iraq, or the environment, or something more edifying?

No. Television isn't about ideas, or events, or wars—it's about people, their faces and their stories, which is why television news is the worst place to learn something new and concrete about anything. Television, at its best—which is to say, when anybody pays attention to it—is essentially Storytime Theater.

Everybody in that departure lounge knew that there were more important things to talk about. But their eyes—all of them, even mine—were on the screen, watching clips of a sobbing judge and Greta Van Susteren and an expert on the decomposition rate of a human female. Look, it's a great American story—a great, gooey, messy, baroque second act with enough twists and comic relief to grab us for a few days. And unlike actual news—about Iraq, about terrorism—this story will, eventually, end. At some point they'll bury the body and workup the DNA and Nancy Grace will start braying about something else. And in 15 years or so, we'll all get reintroduced to Dannielynn in a "Where is she now?" piece on CNN. Because by that time she'll be ready for her second act.



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

"You know what's hot right now?" a television producer asked me over lunch. "Probate law. I'm serious. Very hot."

"Really?" I asked. "Probate law seems kind of boring."

"Are you kidding," he said, spearing a forkful of salad. "People are totally into it. It's got everything: sex, money, family, love, hate. It's built in! The script writes itself. I just sold a show about a gonzo probate lawyer who throws the rulebook out the window for his deserving clients. Lemme tell you. This Anna Nicole thing is fantastic!"

So it's been good for someone. **NR**

COVER STORY

The Coming McCain Moment

Taking a second look

RAMESH PONNURU

"I GOT some encouraging news this morning in the *USA Today*," says Sen. John McCain, holding a copy of the paper with his picture on the front page. "McCain firm on Iraq war," it says above the fold. He flips it over to show the rest of the headline: "despite cost to candidacy." "I can't worry about it," he says. "With something like this, you just can't let it concern you. The issue is too important."

Actually, McCain's campaign is doing better than it seems to be. It is true that the unpopularity of the Iraq War, and specifically of the surge he has long advocated, is dragging his poll numbers down. It is true as well that in many polls he is now behind Rudolph Giuliani.

But Giuliani is a useful opponent for McCain. The good news of the senator's season is that another rival, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, has so far failed to unite the Right behind him. In a McCain-Romney race, Romney would have most conservatives and portions of the party establishment behind him—and might win the nomination.

Giuliani is a different story. He supports taxpayer funding of abortion, sued gunmakers for selling guns, and went to court to keep New York City from giving the names of illegal immigrants to the federal government. Polls show that many Republican voters are unaware of these aspects of the former mayor's record. It is hard to see how he wins the nomination once they learn about them. In a three-way race, some people who prefer Romney to McCain will nonetheless back McCain to head off Giuliani. This year, then, a real threat to McCain has failed to materialize—and a fake one has replaced it.

McCain's apostasies from conservatism, unlike Giuliani's, are well known. The mayor's polls form a ceiling. McCain's could be a floor, if conservatives are willing to reconsider their view of him. If they do, then the current Giuliani moment will be succeeded by a McCain moment. I think conservatives will give him a second look—as they should.

It has become common to complain about the weak Republican field. Actually, it is a strong field. The three leading contenders are smart, competent, serious, articulate, and accomplished. (So is Newt Gingrich, who ranks fourth.) In some of these respects they exceed the incumbent. It just isn't a very orthodox field.

Romney, at least in his 2007 version, is the most conventionally conservative. If elected, he could make a fine president. But he has a big disadvantage as a presidential candidate: He is a Mormon. In December, a FoxNews poll found that 32 percent of voters would be less likely to vote for a candidate if he were Mormon. Speculation about the effect of Romney's Mormonism on his chances has centered on evangelical Christians' theological differences with him. But evangelicals were only slightly more hostile to Mormon candidates than the population at large. Democrats were much more hostile. So even if Romney's conservative social positions get him through the primaries, his religion is a liability in the general election. (It may be that many secular-minded voters consider Mormonism particularly alien and threatening.)

This is unfair to Romney, and to his coreligionists. But this country has elected a non-Protestant president precisely once in its history. If the Republicans were going into 2008 with a large margin of error, it might be worth finding out how voters would react to a Mormon candidate. But Republicans are not going into this election in a strong position. Nominating a Mormon is too risky.

RUMBLES LEFT AND RIGHT

Most of McCain's conservative detractors concede that he would be a formidable candidate in November 2008. They question his ideological bona fides. But it would be a remarkably narrow definition of conservatism that excluded McCain.

"I think the important thing is you look at people's voting record," says McCain, "because sometimes rhetoric can be a little misleading." Over the course of his career, McCain has compiled a pretty conservative voting record. Neither Giuliani nor Romney, as McCain implied, has a record to match. An objective observer looking at Bush and McCain in 1999 would have had to conclude that, based on their histories, McCain was the more conservative of the two.

The senator's reputation changed during his exciting, disastrous 2000 presidential campaign. During the previous years, he had become a true believer in campaign-finance reform. His attack on monied special interests, and his bitterness at the Bush campaign's attacks on him, seemed to pull him left across the board: on tax cuts, on the environment, on health care. The effect was to enhance McCain's standing with independent voters and journalists while repelling conservatives. What further soured conservatives was that they were then starting, for the first time, to take a strongly negative view of campaign-finance reform, hardening into the conviction that it was an assault on free speech (and particularly on conservative organizations).

Independent voters and Democrats gave McCain some primary victories, but without Republicans he could not win the nomination. Still, he was America's most popular politician, and for the next few years he continued to play the "maverick" Republican—and to reap the rewards in his press clippings, which annoyed conservatives at least as much.

From 2004 onward, however, McCain has been moving rightward again, emphasizing his support for the Iraq War and the War on Terror. So far, this move appears to have cost him support among independent voters and reporters without buying him many friends on the right. Conservatives still have the impression of him they formed when he was tacking left. Besides, even in the last two years he has taken some stands to which a lot of conservatives object.

The good news for conservatives is that some of McCain's unconservative positions concern trifling subjects, and some of them have little ongoing relevance. (Some of them are important, though, and I'll get to them later.) After 9/11, McCain shepherded a bill to federalize airport security through the Senate. That's not an issue that's going to come up again. The corporate-accounting scandals gave McCain an opportunity to rail against malefactors of great wealth, which he took. He zinged Bush's Securities and Exchange Commission for its inaction and urged more transparency in executive pay. But he gives no sign of itching to impose more regulations now. He supported a scheme of taxes and regulation to fight smoking. His bill didn't become law, but it is no longer an issue since most of its provisions were adopted by the states.

Even campaign-finance reform isn't the issue it once was. President Bush signed McCain's bill, and the senator says he doesn't want any more legislation. "I think that we need to give this law a chance to work." He doesn't think the Federal Election Commission needs any new powers, although, like most Republicans, he does want it to crack down on "527 groups" that fund political ads.

McCain supported a "patient's bill of rights" that would regulate HMOs. But that bill has gone nowhere, and even if it passed it would not be a large step toward socialized medicine. It was small change compared with the gargantuan Medicare prescription-drug entitlement of 2003. (President Bush, and many conservative congressmen, supported that bill; McCain voted against it.)

McCain wants to make people who buy guns at gun shows pass a background check, ending what he considers a loophole in current law. Gun-rights activists have strong objections to this proposal. But they will have to measure his offense against Giuliani's past, and never-repudiated, advocacy of licensing gun owners.

Some conservatives hold McCain's participation in the "Gang of 14" against him. In 2005, most Senate Republicans, frustrated by unprecedented Democratic filibusters against judicial nominees, wanted to change the rules to prevent such filibusters. Seven Democrats and seven Republicans reached an agreement: The Republicans would leave the rules alone so long as the Democrats used the filibuster only in "extraordinary circumstances." There were good arguments for and against the deal, although there were no good arguments for the preening collective self-regard with which the 14 senators announced it. McCain notes that months after his intervention, the Senate confirmed both John Roberts and Samuel Alito. He thinks it "would have been almost impossible" to confirm them in the aftermath of a bitter fight over a rules change. "That's why they called it the nuclear option, the Senate was about to blow up." Conservatives might disagree with that assessment, while still regarding it as the type of prudential calculation on which allies can disagree.

In 2005 and 2006, McCain differed with the Bush administration about how to interrogate suspected terrorists. The senator, having survived torture himself at the hands of the North Vietnamese, understandably wanted tough anti-torture language put into law. The administration worried that such language, particularly if susceptible to creative interpretation, might make it impossible to conduct coercive interrogations even if they fell short of torture. In the end, Republicans reached a deal that preserved tough interrogations while addressing McCain's concerns.

That leaves three substantial issues between McCain and conservatives. The first is global warming. McCain has been a believer throughout the Bush years. Most conservatives have associated the fight against global warming with environmental zealotry and overregulation. But McCain has tried to come up with a free-market solution, and he is now emphasizing nuclear power as a way to fuel this country without emitting greenhouse gases. "I don't often like to imitate the French," he says, but France is right to use nuclear power. His proposal, with Joe Lieberman, may not get the balance exactly correct, but right now it looks as though McCain was more prescient than most conservatives.

McCain was one of a few Republicans to vote against Bush's tax cuts. He said that the tax cuts were fiscally reckless and too skewed to the rich. But he now accepts those tax cuts as a done deal. Reversing them now, or allowing them to expire, would constitute a tax increase, and McCain has never voted for a general tax increase. When I ask him whether there were any circumstances in which he would accept a tax increase, for example to get the Democrats to agree to spending cuts, he says, "No. None. None." It seems pretty clear that a President McCain would seek spending cuts before tax cuts. But if you take him at his word—and he is a man who takes honor seriously—he won't raise taxes.

Finally, there is immigration. McCain sees eye to eye with Bush on this issue. He thinks a guest-worker program would reduce illegal immigration, and that we should give illegal immigrants already here a path to citizenship since we aren't going to deport them all. A lot of conservatives want tougher border security, period. Nothing McCain can do now will please some of his critics. But if his bill passes this year, he may try to move on. Or he could try to mollify his reasonable critics by supporting an amendment. Last year, Sen. Johnny Isakson of Georgia proposed that the bill's border-enforcement provisions go into effect first, and be shown to work, before illegal immigrants could start on their path to citizenship. McCain is open to the concept.

A SOCIAL CONSERVATIVE

McCain gets a bad rap from social conservatives. He opposes the Federal Marriage Amendment on the theory that states should set their own marriage policies. But he opposes same-sex marriage, too, and says that he would support a constitutional amendment if the federal courts ever tried to impose it on reluctant states. As a practical matter, it is hard to see how any president could get such an amendment enacted without that type of provocation.

The senator has been rock-solid on abortion. Unlike anyone else in the race, he has a pro-life record stretching back to the early 1980s. Like President Bush, he says that the Supreme Court made a mistake in *Roe*; he goes further than Bush when he adds that the Court should overturn it. He voted to confirm all of the sitting conservative justices, plus Robert Bork.

McCain muddied the waters with one foolish remark in 1999. He was trying to make the point that the country is not ready for abortion to be prohibited, but in the course of trying to say that he said that the country wasn't ready for *Roe* to go. He corrected himself quickly, but that lone remark has been used to portray him as a secret pro-choicer or a flip-flopper.

He really has broken ranks with pro-lifers twice. In the early 1990s, he voted to fund research using tissue from aborted fetuses, and he now supports federal funding for research on embryos taken from fertility clinics. But he draws the line at stem-cell research involving cloned human embryos. He says that he would prohibit that, even mistakenly claiming that he has co-sponsored legislation to that effect.

Social conservatives think that Republicans have repeatedly betrayed them. At the highest levels of national politics, that's not true. The reason that social conservatives haven't achieved many of their objectives even though they have helped to elect a lot of Republicans over the last generation is that those objectives are hard to achieve. It has been slow work to fight the pervasive liberalism of the elite legal culture. But when President Reagan appointed Anthony Kennedy and the first President Bush appointed David Souter, they weren't trying to betray conservatives; they didn't know how those justices would turn out. McCain thinks that type of mistake can be avoided if presidents pick nominees who don't just say the right things, but have track records of judging soundly. He's right. Conservatives' reception of McCain shouldn't be colored by historical mythology.

For some conservatives, these discrete issues matter less than what they say about McCain's instincts. His friendly relations with journalists—one of his campaign aides was only half-joking in 2000 when he called the media McCain's "base"—often make conservatives suspicious. But McCain's steadfast support for the Iraq War, and his advocacy of the surge, belie the claim that he will do anything for good press.

Grover Norquist, the anti-tax activist who has long clashed with McCain, says that the senator is worse than a flip-flopper: By voting right, tacking left, and then tacking right, he has shown himself to be devoid of principle. But as the foregoing review of his record suggests, most of McCain's zigzags have been matters of tone and emphasis, not changes of position. He hasn't switched his views as much as Romney or even Giuliani.

There are genuinely disconcerting elements to McCain's politics. He talks about cutting spending, but he rarely connects limited government to individual freedom. He is an inveterate moralist, which eludes many observers because he is concerned about honor rather than virtue. In many of the cases discussed earlier, his moralism slid very quickly into support for regulation: of campaign contributions, of tobacco, even of boxing. At times, his rhetoric about the need for individuals to subsume themselves in the life of the nation verges uncomfortably close to idolatry of the state.

But McCain's merits are considerable as well. He has been tough on spending, and been willing to ally with the most conservative members of the Senate to fight earmarks. He has been a stalwart free trader: "Since Phil Gramm left, there's no greater free-trader in the Senate than I am." (McCain supported Gramm's presidential campaign in 1996, and Gramm is supporting his now.) Curbing the growth of entitlements, he says, will be one of his top priorities as president. He has long supported personal accounts.

Leave all of that aside for a moment. For a lot of conservatives, the War on Terror is paramount. That's why some of them are willing to overlook Giuliani's faults. But if toughness on terrorism trumps everything else, with toughness defined as competent execution of the administration's basic strategy—and that's the way it has to be defined for this argument to work for Giuliani at all—then McCain is hands down the best candidate. He has better national-security credentials than Giuliani, having been involved in foreign policymaking for more than two decades while the latter has barely been involved at all. More than any other candidate, he has shown a commitment to winning in Iraq. He has supported it, indeed, more vigorously than Bush has waged it, and he has put his career on the line.

McCain has the moral authority to get a country that has grown tired of the war to listen to him, an authority President Bush has seen slip away. That isn't just because he is a former prisoner of war with one son serving in the Marines and another in the Naval Academy—although that helps. It is because he is not seen as playing politics with the war, as most Democrats and Republicans are, and he never will be.

Conservatives may need to reach some understandings with McCain before throwing their support to him: on the vice-presidential nominee, on immigration, maybe even on the number of terms McCain will serve as president. (He is 70.) But he can win both the nomination and the election. He is plenty conservative. And he deserves a long second look. **NR**

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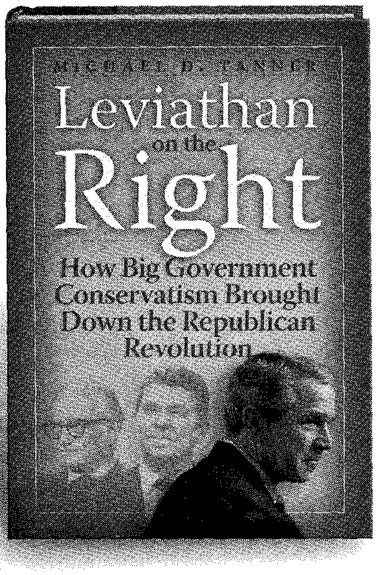
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AT WAR

Securing Afghanistan

The Americans keep trying

BING WEST

Kabul

No sooner did President Bush decide that Iraq required a troop surge than dire warnings about Afghanistan popped up in the news. After visiting here in January, defense secretary Robert Gates promptly extended the tours of 3,200 U.S. combat soldiers. He also requested that Congress provide $8.6 billion over the next two years for Afghan security forces, and $2 billion for reconstruction. This followed repeated warnings from American military officers that both the U.S. and NATO-Europe were falling short in force levels and financial aid.

Gates flew to Brussels and urged the European nations to make good on their pledges of money and troops. Germany and France predictably demurred, but President Bush chided them, and in so doing emphasized the redoubled U.S. effort: "When our commanders on the ground say to our respective countries we need additional help, our NATO countries must provide it. . . I've ordered an increase in U.S. forces in Afghanistan."

Is this Afghan surge meant to reinforce success or stave off defeat? That depends on how one defines success and failure. Violence and rebellion are endemic in this restive country with a weak government, yielding data as erratic as the weather.

Press accounts routinely stress indicators of a reconstituted Taliban. Suicide-bomb attacks increased from 18 in 2005 to 116 in 2006, while direct-fire attacks grew from three a day in 2005 to more than ten a day in 2006. Opium production is at record levels, while violence has forced the closure of many schools in southeastern Afghanistan.

Yet here in the north, the scene is strikingly different. The U.S. 82nd Airborne Division is deployed east of Kabul to cover the approaches from Pakistan, while U.S. Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) are advising 21 Afghan battalions. The ETTs praise the fighting spirit of these battalions, which respond to Taliban attacks with vigorous counterattacks. I am accompanying Lt. Gen. James N. Mattis ("Mad Dog" to his admiring grunts), the head of the Marine Central Command, and my conversations are primarily with Marine ETTs.

But it is the spirit of Afghan soldiers that is apparent in my visits to the 201st Corps of the Afghan Army and the Kabul Military Training Center. The Afghan battalions are cohesive, with 90 percent present for duty, a remarkably high figure. They are not without problems, of course. Over 70 percent of the soldiers are illiterate, and the officers scarcely know how to use a computer. The army rushes into fights, doesn't plan, lacks a non-commissioned officer corps, bungles logistics, and fails to coordinate among units. But, given the army's pluck and determination, a long-term advisory effort can overcome these defects (and would face little opposition from the Afghan people—poll after poll shows that they like and appreciate American soldiers).

Both Iraq and Afghanistan face insurgencies, but the differences are stark. In Afghanistan, uniformed soldiers and unarmed police browse the open-air bazaars; in Iraq, soldiers on leave and police wear civilian clothes and hide their identities. In Afghanistan, the Taliban train and mass across the border in Pakistani sanctuaries; in Iraq, Sunni insurgents and Shiite death squads live among local sympathizers. It's true that, in the Kandahar-Helmand area some 250 miles south of Kabul, the Taliban pose as "protectors" (for a fee) of poppy-growing farmers. But for the most part they can't count on popular support to conceal their presence.

Their tactics tend [illegible]entional. They move in bands that number between six and sixty, and mass more men for attacks. "The Taliban scatter when Afghan soldiers move in," Lt. Col. Robert Manion, a U.S. adviser, says. "Near the border, they prefer to fight from the hills, not get trapped in a village." That's because they would be picked out and seized there, thanks to their distinctive accents, the willingness of village elders to betray them, and the disinclination of Afghan soldiers to read them their *Miranda* rights. The result is a military seesaw. The Taliban mass in Pakistan and strike along the border, but the deeper into Afghanistan they advance the more vulnerable they are to counterattack.

Most of the 20,000 American soldiers in combat units, plus 6,000 support and training troops, are in the north, where numerous mountain passes from Pakistan offer a short route to Kabul. In late 2001, the Taliban fled east after being routed. About 70 miles south of the fabled Khyber Pass, U.S. forces temporarily trapped them at Tora Bora. But the Central Command under Gen. Tommy Franks failed to block the passes, and bin Laden escaped with the core of his fighters. In the months thereafter, U.S. troops scoured the Afghan side of the border, and as months turned into years the effort morphed into a sustained defense against persistent Taliban probes.

In the south, NATO-Europe units—primarily British, Canadian, Dutch, and Romanian—are stationed around Kandahar. The Taliban spent 2006 focused on infiltrating that area. Kandahar was their tribal home ground; poppy farming in the region provided money; and European troops were less aggressive than the Americans.

Some combat was intense, including a major battle at Panjwayi. The Canadians have lost 44 of 2,500 soldiers, roughly comparable to fatalities in U.S. Marine battalions in Iraq, and a poll found that a majority of Canadians want their troops withdrawn. This reaction is emblematic of an underlying problem: To avoid casualties, many European countries have imposed unreasonable rules of engagement on their soldiers, forcing them to cede territory and initiative to the Taliban and go on

---

Mr. West, a former Marine, was an assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration. He is the author of *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah* and *The Village: A Combined Action Platoon in Vietnam*.

defense. The overall pattern in Afghanistan is deterioration of military conditions in the south, where European troops predominate, and improvement in the U.S.-controlled north.

PRUDENCE AND OPPORTUNITY

Why, then, the sudden infusion of *American* troops and money? There are reasons of both prudence and opportunity. Since summer, U.S. and NATO commanders have been seeking an increase in forces of about 15 percent. While Secretary Gates has taken steps to ensure that the U.S. fulfills this request, it is likely that NATO-Europe will neither add sufficient forces nor permit its commanders to respond vigorously to the Taliban's expected spring offensive. The U.S. may have to compensate for this fecklessness—particularly that of Germany, Spain, and Italy—by redeploying troops to the south. Gates's decision to increase American forces was thus prudent military planning.

He was also seizing a political opportunity, neatly summed up by British general David Richards, who until recently commanded the NATO force. "This is a good war," Richards said. "This is a winnable war." American politicians opposed to Iraq want to show that they are not soft on our enemies. The Taliban is a clear enemy; casualties in Afghanistan have been comparatively light; and the dollar cost of operations here is a fraction of what it is in Iraq. Knowing all this, Gates expects that politicians' self-interest will bring them to back the "good" war.

Where this leads, though, is another question. In 2002, the Taliban retreated to a sanctuary across a porous border, and for the next five years the U.S. and NATO hooked and jabbed to keep them bottled up while an Afghan army was trained. Today there are but 36,000 Afghan soldiers in a country of 30 million, with a thousand-mile border along which the zealous enemy can attack. The Afghan army is pushing to train 70,000 troops by the end of 2008. I ask Maj. Gen. Mohammad Mangal, the commander of the 201st Afghan Corps, when U.S. forces will no longer be needed. He spells out the conditions: "We need good equipment and 70,000 soldiers. And we need honesty by Pakistan to stop the infiltration. It must not allow training bases outside our borders."

The U.S. will provide the equipment,

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Fifty Years Since Roth v. United States
The National Tragedy of the Supreme Court's Misjudgment on Obscenity

by Daniel Mark Cohen

> *"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people."*
> *-Samuel Adams*

From the commencement of sporting events, to the conclusion of presidential addresses, in times of celebration and in times of peril, Americans, religious and secular alike, by reflex and by ritual, have grown accustomed to reciting the most concise of petitionary prayers: "God bless America." However, considering the wanton patronage of pornography by so many millions of Americans, and the underlying, abasing purpose of that enterprise, considering the vehement even aggressive opposition of Americans to regulation of pornography's distribution via the Internet, and most of all, considering the consequent gratuitous and indelible sexual corruption of the souls of the country's children, practices enshrined in law and unassailably sanctioned by the United States Supreme Court, the question that remains to be answered is how Americans can believe they are, in the collective sense, entitled to God's blessing? In other words, petitioning God to bless America rests upon the underlying, unspoken premise that America comprehensively deserves such blessing. But why should God bless America when, as a nation, she insists, and often aggressively so, on the free, unregulated distribution of the most vile sexual images so that they daily reach the otherwise innocent eyes and chaste minds of countless *millions* of children, thus arresting their emotional development, prematurely agitating their souls, and in so doing, diminishing their posterity, and so, the greater posterity of the nation?

God bless America?
Under the circumstances, why should God bless America?

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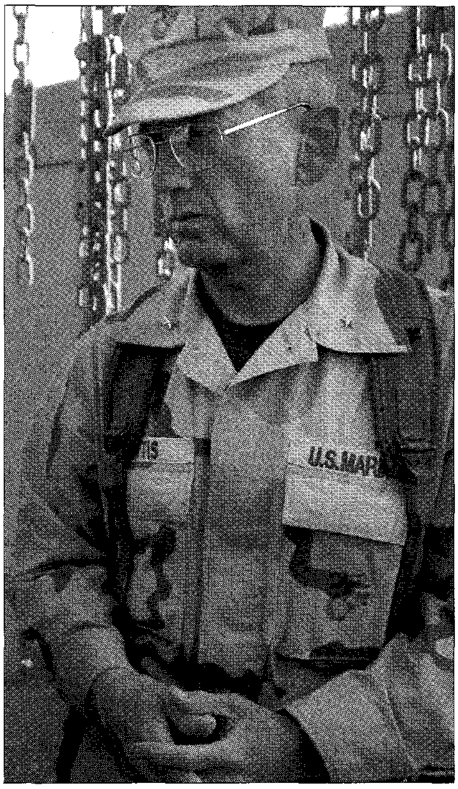
and the soldiers are being trained. The problem is that Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf lacks the internal political support to deprive al-Qaeda and the Taliban of their sanctuary. As long as this sanctuary cannot be eliminated, there are only two strategies for countering its threat.

The first is containment: wearing down the enemy year after year by counterpunching when it attacks at the end of each winter. The hope is that the Taliban, ever more discouraged and exhausted, will eventually disintegrate, despite the large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan that provide a steady stream of foot soldiers. Building up a capable Afghan army will allow NATO and the U.S. to withdraw ground forces while continuing to provide air support. Any time the Taliban advance over Afghanistan's open terrain in large numbers, they will be vulnerable to air attack.

For five years, NATO has pursued this containment strategy under the assumption that the Taliban's ideology is repugnant to most Afghans. This approach acknowledged that the Taliban could make limited political inroads in the southeast among Pashto tribal villages and in poppy-growing regions, but assumed that the Taliban's intolerance and tyranny would limit its popularity.

But NATO now appears concerned that the Taliban are gaining too much support. Hence containment will be supplemented with, or even replaced by, a second strategy: nation building (also known as counterinsurgency). The main military component of this strategy is to deploy NATO training teams—primarily American—with the local police in about 100 districts. (Advisers will also be embedded in 100 army battalions.) The police will root out Taliban proselytizers recruiting among the unemployed who are disillusioned by the lack of progress since the West swooped in five years ago. The expansion of the U.S. military mission will provide more security for the reconstruction teams that are struggling to modernize the country and introduce alternatives to its heroin-based economy. In theory, economic development will bring with it Western concepts of polity, compromise, equality, and similar ideals. The hope is that this will prevent the Taliban from putting down roots and creeping toward Kabul.



Lt. Gen. James N. 'Mad Dog' Mattis

MARIO TAMA/GETTY

EMBEDDING DEEP

The most significant item in the Gates Plan for Afghanistan is thus not the additional combat forces, but rather the decision to more than double the number of American advisers and to secure funds for police training. Afghanistan currently has about 20,000 fully trained police and 30,000 more who are not qualified to use weapons. They are paid meager wages and scattered haphazardly through 120-odd districts. Yet a recent survey found that 90 percent were at their posts, despite scant supervision and weak linkage to the government in Kabul. They stay alive by accommodation with a local or intermittent Taliban presence, or by abandoning their posts when the Taliban advance.

The embedment plan is more "mission leap" than "mission creep," and will involve great difficulties. The U.S. command does not put advisers anywhere without guaranteeing timely reinforcement. In the northeast, it is common for American special forces and advisers to share combat outposts with Afghan soldiers and, sometimes, police. This provides sufficient numbers for defense. In addition, American reaction forces mounted in helicopters are on call. Providing reinforcement to advisory teams in the southeast will require additional reaction forces, by arrangement either with NATO or with Afghan army units that lack the mobility for quick response.

Our forces have not done well training the Iraqi police—a project that has only recently become a semi-military mission—and techniques and tactics to create nationwide constabularies on the model of the Spanish gendarmerie have yet to be developed. Making command arrangements between the Afghan army and the Afghan police—which, under the plan, are to cooperate—will also be hard, given that they dislike and distrust each other.

Only a few years ago the Bush administration vigorously rejected the idea of involving the Pentagon in nation building, but that is just what getting in the local-police business will require. Afghanistan, with a 20 percent literacy rate among men and 7 percent among women, faces staggering obstacles to its development. The opium trade accounts for at least a quarter of GDP. Working at the local-police level will inevitably force American advisers to deal with payoffs to smugglers and poppy farmers, relations among tribes, judicial proceedings, and other fraught situations. And the size of the overall task is staggering. Last year, for instance, Canada's Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team gave out medication, tools, school supplies, food, blankets, toys, carpets, and radios to 2,000 people living in remote villages, in addition to supplying 1,000 police with uniforms, winter coats, boots, belts, gloves, and flashlights. That barely scratched the surface.

While the decision to train police sends a strong signal of confidence in the Afghan fighting man, its execution will be an enormous challenge and a long-term burden. From the outset, America and NATO-Europe need to be very clear about how many soldiers and advisers, how much money, and how many years they are willing to devote to the new strategy. They also need to decide exactly how progress will be measured. Success will probably involve U.S. forces at the local level for a decade or more.

The "good war" is about to get a lot bigger. Whether it gets better, we will see. **NR**

the long view

ROB LONG

Psssssst! Pssssssst! Al! Al! Over here!

Tipper, is that you?

No, Al. Over here. On the credenza.

Oscar™?

Right! How's it goin', bud?

Wow. You can talk?

I can't talk *talk. Out loud, I mean. Only you can hear me.*

But I can see your tiny gold lips moving. Are you inside my head?

Inside, outside, what's the difference? Let's just say I'm around your head, okay?

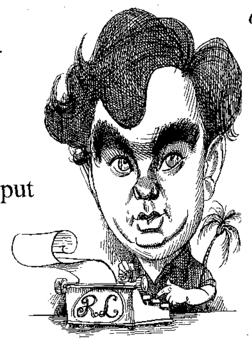
I'm frightened of you, Oscar. Please stop talking in my head.

What? Why? I'm your friend, Al.

Go away! Go away, crazy voices!

Shhhhhh! Keep it down. She'll hear.

Good. I want her to hear. She'll get me the medication and then I won't ever be crazy again. Tipper! Tipper!



Keep it down! Shhhhhhh! Dammit! What is your problem?

I don't like you. You get inside my head and I get all into a muddle. I'm going to put you in the drawer.

Don't do that! Put me down!

But you're scary. And Tipper doesn't like it when I talk to things on my desk.

Oh, Al, buddy, it's not like that. I'm here to help, is all. To help. I just want you to be happy, okay? Don't you want to be happy?

I guess.

Don't you want to make everyone else happy, too? All the children who are going to be so hot in the future?

Well, some of them will be cold. You see, the idea of "global warming" is really kind of a misnomer. What we're talking about is "climate change," brought about by recklessly and heedlessly adding greenhouse gases to the—

Al! Hey! C'mon! I get it, okay? I'm Oscar ™—remember? You won me for that movie you did about the ozone and the earth and the thing? What I'm saying is, you keep saying that you're not running for president, and all I hear around town when you're carrying me from party to party is people begging you to run. So, run! Run, you schmuck!

I'm not sure I like your tone of voice.

C'mon! It's Oscar™ talking! You can have it all! Listen to me. Obama? The guy's a cipher. A nobody. Hasn't done squat. You think he's going to hold up under a national campaign? Please. VP material—maybe. If that.

What about her?

What about her? You don't think you can take her down? Seriously? Are you seriously telling me that you're afraid of her?

I'm not afraid of her, but—

Don't give me "buts"—look, it's either her or Obama, and from where I stand—

I think Kucinich could really give them a run for their money.

Don't make me hit you with my sword, okay? Al, this is yours. Yours. You got cheated eight years ago, you know you did. And it hurt. Hurt bad. You got all inside yourself and let's face it, you sorta went nuts. With the beard and the extra weight. But this is your chance! They love you!

They did seem to sort of crowd around me, at the parties.

I know, bud. I was there, remember?

And Geffen and those guys really kept pushing me to run.

Right! They think you're cool!

I've waited so long to be cool.

And you know what else? They absolutely hate her. Even the people who like her hate her.

That's true.

So come on!

You know what? Maybe I will.

You're going to make a lot of people very happy.

You think?

I know. And you know who's going to be happiest?

Who?

Leo.

Leo DiCaprio? You think? You think he even cares about stupid old me?

What's with that? You are NOT stupid, Al. You're smart and tall and you've got a terrific speaking voice. Maybe lay off the bread, but—

You think Leo would like it if I ran?

I KNOW he would.

He's so handsome.

Okay, now.

Just so incredibly handsome.

Okay, now. Let's, um, let's not get all into that stuff.

I'm just saying he's handsome.

Yeah, I get it. Look, I know what you mean and you know what you mean, but I think it's better not to get into that whole . . . area. People talk, you know?

What?

I'm just saying. Look, you've got a very appealing quality. A very kind of swishy appealing quality.

WHAT?

Let's change the subject.

No, I want you to tell me what you mean. Right now!

Shhhhhhh!

Al?

Yes, Tipper?

Who are you talking to in there?

Um . . . no one.

It's not the voices again, is it?

No, no, no, no, no. Of course not. That's all . . . that's all in the past. Say, Tip, got a sec?

Sure. What's up?

I'd like to run a little something by you.

Go for it!

Keep quiet.

What?

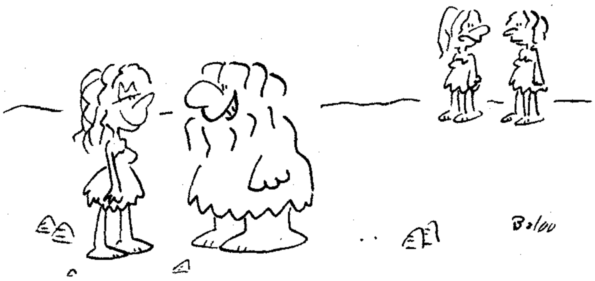
Not you, Tipper.

HELP!!!!

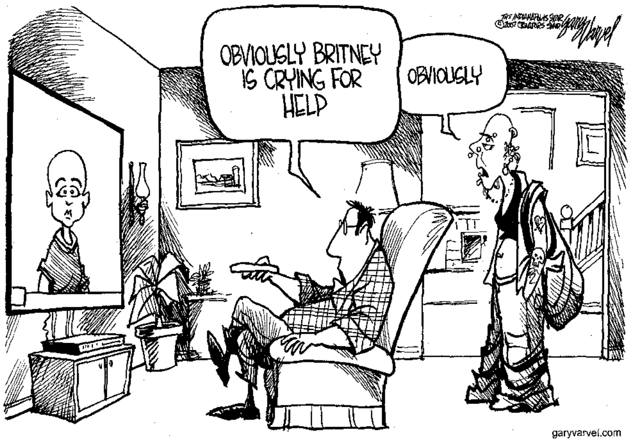
MESSAGE TO MUSHARRAF

The border's getting spongy—
Afghanistan's, that is;
So Bush dispatched Dick Cheney
To give Pervez the biz,
To wit: The Dems could sever
Funds for Islamabad
(Their snickersnee is painful).
George feels like he's been had.

—W. H. VON DREELE



"He may have an opposable thumb,
but she has him wrapped around her little finger."


OBVIOUSLY BRITNEY IS CRYING FOR HELP
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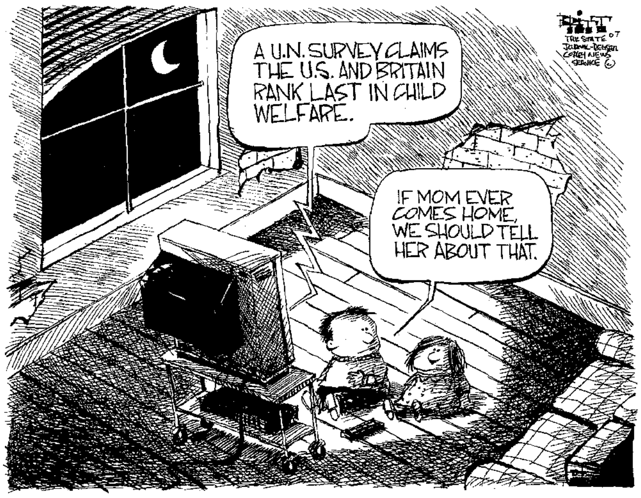
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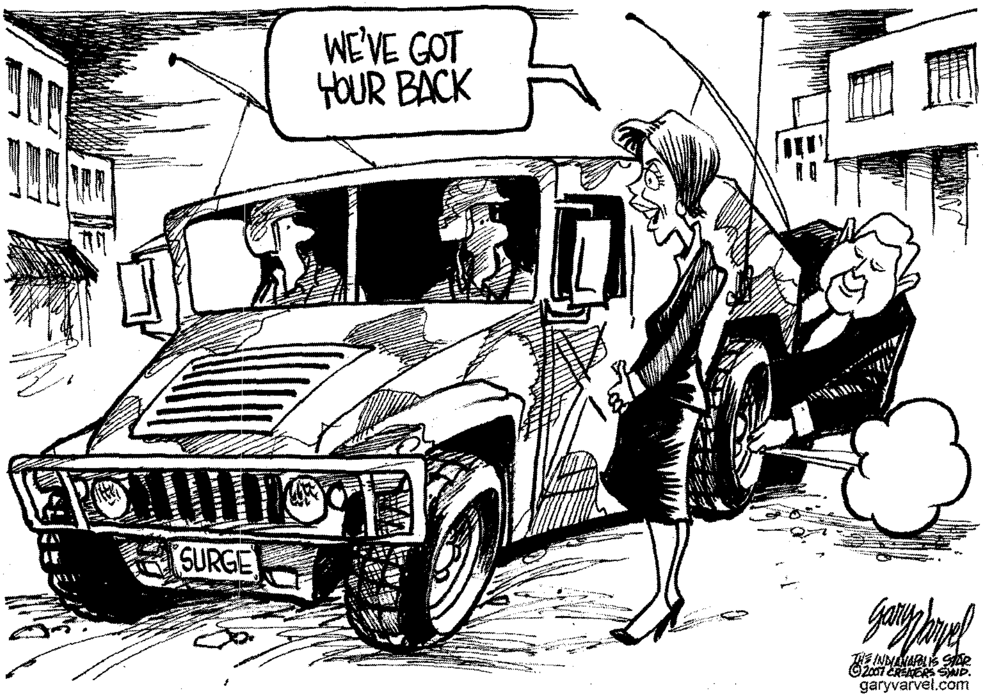
WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK
SURGE
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Lonely Atheists of The Global Village

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Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon,
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The God Delusion,
by Richard Dawkins
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416 pp., $27)

MICHAEL NOVAK

TIME magazine, ever the vigilant trend spotter, has celebrated a recent wave of books by atheists—among them, these three by Sam Harris, Daniel C. Dennett, and Richard Dawkins. These books have three purposes: to speed up the disappearance of Biblical faith, especially in America; to proselytize for rational atheism; and to boost morale among atheists, in part by calling attention to support groups for them. Their overriding purpose is the first one: in the words of Harris, "to demolish the intellectual and moral pretensions of Christianity."

But all three books evince considerable disdain for Judaism, too. Dawkins calls it "a tribal cult of a single fiercely unpleasant God, morbidly obsessed with sexual restrictions, with the smell of charred flesh, with his own superiority over rival gods, and with the exclusiveness of his chosen desert tribe." And the God of the Old Testament, Dawkins calls a "psychotic delinquent."

And it is not as if they admire Islam; rather, they use Islam as a weapon for bashing Christianity and Judaism. Harris says to Christians, "Nonbelievers like myself stand beside you, dumbstruck by the Muslim hordes who chant death to whole nations of the living. But we stand dumbstruck by you as well—by your denial of tangible reality, by the suffering you create in service to your religious myths, and by your attachment to an imaginary God." In truth, then, the main intention of all three authors is to praise the superiority of atheism, at least the rational atheism of professors such as themselves.

In fact, there is much in atheism to praise. With the evidence of the admirable moral code laid out in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in his hands, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that in order to be good, in at least one important sense, it is not necessary to share in Biblical faith. Aristotle showed a path toward human flourishing, both for an entire polity and for noble individuals. (To be "good" in another important sense, "being born again" or "saved," requires a bit more than Aristotle could provide, or even imagine.) Besides, atheists—or, at least, non-Biblical pagans—were able to build such magnificent buildings as the Parthenon, the pyramids of Egypt, the palaces of Babylon; and to produce great literature, and the beginnings of several key sciences in varied fields such as astronomy, arithmetic, medicine, and agriculture. Finally, atheists—or, at least, non-believers—have always been a spur to Biblical self-understanding, by raising questions, doubting, throwing down insulting or even respectful intellectual challenges. It was from the pagan intellectual class that many of the early Fathers of the Church (Origen, Clement of Alexandria, St. Augustine himself) came to Biblical faith, and they usually remained in close dialogue with their unbelieving peers, much to the benefit of their own understanding of their faith.

Shall I add that my own early work was centered upon the dialogue between believers and unbelievers, the intellectual horizon of the Absurd (as Camus, Sartre, and so many others called it) and that of Biblical faith—in such books as *Belief and Unbelief* and *The Experience of Nothingness*, for instance. For that reason, I really wanted to like these new books on atheism. I have learned a lot about atheists and believers from Jürgen Habermas, possibly the best-known atheist in Europe. Habermas writes of believers with respect and as equal partners in an important dialogue. A respectful regard for mutual dignity is, Habermas holds, essential to the practice of rationality among human beings. Recently, I had the honor of a long series of exchanges with a very smart American atheist, Heather Mac Donald, and these were a pleasure to conduct, with mutual regard, patience, and candor on both sides.

Alas, it is extremely difficult to engage on the same level with Harris, Dennett, and Dawkins. All of them think that religion is so great a menace that they do not have much disposition for dialogue. The battle flags they put into the wind are Voltaire's *Ecrasez l'infâme!* Meanwhile, all three pretend that atheists "question everything" and "submit to relentless, almost tedious, self-criticism." Yet in these books there is not a shred of evidence that their authors have ever had any doubts whatever about the rightness of their own atheism. Self-questioning about their own scholarly indifference to their subject; about the horrific brutalities committed in the name of "scientific atheism" during the 20th century; about the restless and mercurial dissatisfactions in atheist and secular movements during the past hundred years; and about the demographic weaknesses thereof—all such questions are notable by their absence. Moreover, although an atheist zeitgeist dominates university campuses in America, it has not proved persuasive to huge numbers of students, who hold their noses and put up with it. Why does atheism persuade so few? Our authors never ask.

I particularly wanted to like the book by Richard Dawkins. I had heard that his is a well-furnished and well-rounded mind, and that he writes with the music and wit of an elegant literary stylist. His fans present him as the very model of a reasonable man. Dawkins, too, expressly presents himself and other atheists as "Brights," distinguished by their "healthy" and

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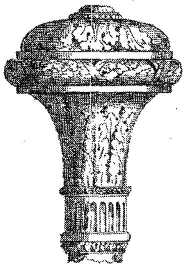
"vigorous" minds. Poor believers—he openly complains—are by contrast with him trapped in delusion, unquestioning, mentally dead. He makes not a gesture of seeking to learn from them.

Actually, Dawkins's public record is worse than that. He led a two-part show on religion for British television, called *The Root of All Evil?* While writing now that he disagrees with the title the producers gave it, he freely appeared under it. This is what he asks of religious people: "Imagine, with John Lennon, a world with no religion." Wouldn't most of the violence and distortion introduced into human life disappear? Now it would be rather original of Dawkins to make such a point, except that in Britain this view is quite conventional. Propagated by pop star and scientist alike, it is according to a recent poll shared by 70 percent of the British population.

Throughout the West, it appears that neither scientist nor pop star takes time to consider contemporary religious experience in the light of some of its most sophisticated and heroic practitioners. For instance, never before our own time have so many millions of persons of Biblical faith been thrown into concentration camps, tortured, and murdered, as they have been under recent self-described atheist regimes. It would have been wonderful if any of our three authors had measured their vision of religion against the hard-won Biblical faith of the originally atheist scientist Anatoly Sharansky, who served nine years in the Soviet Gulag simply for vindicating the rights of Soviet citizens who were Jews. Sharansky has written the record of his suffering in a brilliant autobiography, *Fear No Evil.* I think I have never read of a braver moral man, determined to live as a free man, courageously showing nothing but moral contempt for the morals of KGB officials, under whose total power he had to live. Sharansky went on courageously day by dreary day, deprived of sufficient food, deprived of sight of the sky and sun. He was punished in innumerable ways under a kind of Skinnerian conditioning designed to "correct" his behavior, and this regimen went on year after year, attempting to wear down his resistance, to hold out for him trivial blandishments, tormenting his soul by isolating him and depriving him of human support.



Ironically, however, his prison experiences led Sharansky to dimensions of reason that far exceeded anything he had encountered in his earlier scientific practice. To survive, he needed to open himself to learning far more than science had taught him. He was asked to sign his name to certain untruths: "Who will ever know? What difference will it make? It is such a small thing, and it will make things go much better for you and for us, it will be for the common good." One of Sharansky's colleagues, a noble soul, nonetheless deceived himself into thinking that it would be better to lie about a few small things, if in turn he were earlier freed to carry the message of human rights outside the camps. Sharansky watched other men try to keep their spirits up by hope—hoping for better treatment, hoping for earlier liberation, and then suddenly so weakened by false hopes that they could no longer resist complicity. Sharansky found that he needed a source of discernment deeper than any he had previously known.

In those days, the love of his beloved and brave wife, and friends and other dissidents, came to his cell in rarely received letters or messages. But such messages could also have weakened and betrayed him. In his torments of soul, he found enormous companionship with King David of many centuries earlier, when a Hebrew edition of the Psalms was allowed to fall into his hands. The realism of David went right to his heart, and heavily bolstered his defenses. He learned the strength to be found in community—his community—in partaking of traditional rituals, drawing sustenance from the earlier sufferings, strivings, and wisdom of his ancestors. Unwittingly, one cellmate (who might have been working with the KGB) gave Sharansky another lesson in "the interconnection of souls." One of Sharansky's greatest scientific heroes had long been Galileo. In telling Sharansky of how other prisoners had made "life easier for everybody" simply by signing "harmless" papers that no one outside would ever see, his cellmate mentioned how even Galileo had been persuaded to sign certain statements about his own errors, just to put the whole mess behind him. Like a thunderbolt, these words of his cellmate flooded Sharansky's mind with vivid awareness of the interconnectedness of all souls in history—those who remain faithful to the truth, and those who betray it. Galileo's betrayal four hundred years earlier was now being used to seduce Sharansky, just as every spiritual surrender of another individual in the Gulag was used to pound home to him that long-term resistance was useless. In that lightning flash, Sharansky saw the power of inner truthfulness down the ages, that sort of electronic belt of fidelity that ties all regions and all times together, in however many hearts remain faithful to the truth. Sharansky wanted to be reborn as a member of that community, and he changed his name to Natan, signifying the Biblical community with which he wanted to be identified through all time.

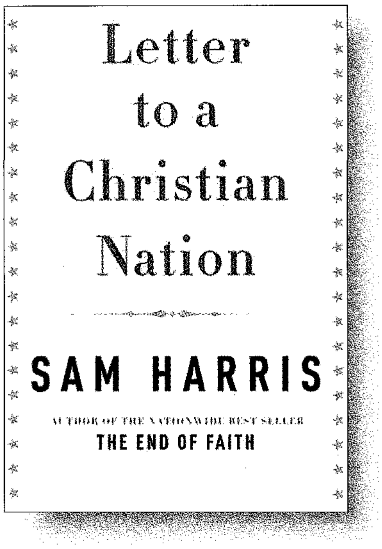
Sharansky became, even in the Gulag, more and more an observant Jew, in one comic scene forcing even his camp supervisor to participate—just the two of them—in a lighting of the menorah. Sharansky writes very little directly about God, but it is certain beyond a doubt that he came to see something profoundly deficient in his earlier scientific habits of mind. These were noble as far as they go, and he has never renounced them, but in his extreme circumstances they proved too limited. He came also to be ashamed of his earlier agnosticism and cavalier attitude toward "organized religion." The community that had preserved the Psalms of King David down so many centuries offered him companionship of soul, and recharged his will to resist, at a crucial point in his long imprisonment.

It was, then, a huge disappointment to me to find that Dennett, Harris, and especially Dawkins paid no attention to the actual conversion experiences and narratives of fidelity, which are so common in the prison literature of our time. Moreover, none of them ever put their weak, confused, and unplumbed ideas about God under scrutiny. Their natural habit of mind is anthropomorphic. They tend to think of God as if He were a human being, bound to human limitations. They are almost as literal in their readings of the Bible as the least educated, most literal-minded fundamentalist in Flannery O'Connor's rural Georgia. They regale themselves with finding contradictions and impossibilities in these literal readings of theirs, but the full force of their ridicule depends on misreading the literary form of the Biblical passages at stake, whether they be allegorical, metaphorical, poetic, or resonant with many meanings, for the nourishment of a soul under stress. The Bible almost never pretends to be science, or strictly literal history.

Our three authors pride themselves on how science advances in understanding over time, and also on how moral thinking becomes in some ways deeper and more demanding. They do not give any attention to the ways in which religious understanding also grows, develops, and evolves. They seem utterly ignorant of John Henry Newman's brilliant little *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. It hardly dawns upon them that the Biblical faiths have been, from the very beginning, in constant—and mutually enriching—dialogue with skeptical and secular intelligence. One can see progress in religious understanding from one part of the Biblical era to another, and the authors of Scripture themselves call attention to it.

Our three authors, it does seem, are a bit blinded by their own repugnance toward religion. Even his good friends, Dawkins writes, ask him why he is driven to be so "hostile" to religious people. Why not, they say, as intelligent as you are, quietly lay out your devastating arguments against believers, in a calm and unruffled manner? Dawkins's answer to his friends is forthright: "I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise. . . . Fundamentalist religion is hell-bent on ruining the scientific education of countless thousands of innocent, well-meaning, eager young minds. Non-fundamentalist, 'sensible' religion may not be doing that. But it is making the world safe for fundamentalism by teaching children, from their earliest years, that unquestioning faith is a virtue." Dawkins refuses to be part of the public "conspiracy" to pay religion respect, when it deserves contempt.

Yet his complaint about "unquestioning" faith seems a bit odd. Some of us have thought that the origin of religion lies in the unlimited drive in human beings to ask questions—which is our primary experience of the infinite. Anything finite that we encounter can be questioned, and seems ultimately unsatisfying. That is the experience that keeps driving the mind and soul on and on, and is its first foretaste of that which is beyond time and space. "Our hearts are restless, Lord," St. Augustine recorded, with much resonance in millions upon millions of inquiring minds down through human history ever since. "Unquestioning faith"? The writings of the medieval thinkers record question after question, disputation after disputation, and real results in history hinged upon the resolution of each. Many of the questions arose from skeptical, unbelieving lawyers, philosophers, and others in the medieval universities; others from the Arab scholars whose works had recently burst upon the Western universities; still others from Maimonides and other Jewish scholars; and a great many from the greatest pagan thinkers of every preceding century. Questions have been the heart and soul of Judaism and Christianity for millennia.


Letter to a Christian Nation
SAM HARRIS
AUTHOR OF THE NATIONWIDE BEST SELLER
THE END OF FAITH

To be sure, Dawkins at least does think there are some religious people who can be converted to atheism by his arguments. He describes them as the "open-minded people whose childhood indoctrination was not too insidious, or for other reasons didn't 'take,' or whose native intelligence is strong enough to overcome it." Dawkins presents such believers with an ultimatum: either join him in "breaking free from the vice of religion altogether" or remain amongst the close-minded types who are unable to overcome "the god delusion."

On the fifth page of his book, Dawkins describes his hopes: "If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down." It surprised me that Dawkins would turn out to be such a proselytizer. Most of all what surprised me is that, while all three authors write as if science is the be-all and end-all of rational discourse, these three books of theirs are by no means scientific. On the contrary, they are examples of *dialectic*—arguments from within one point of view, or horizon, addressed to human beings who share a different point of view. Surely, one of the noblest works of reason is to enter into respectful argument with others, whose vision of reality is dramatically different from one's own, in order that both parties may learn from this exchange, and come to a deeper mutual respect. Our authors engage in dialectic, not science, but they can scarcely be said to do so with respect for those they address. Thus, Dawkins: "Of course, dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads are immune to argument, their resistance built up over years of childhood indoctrination. . . . Among the more effective immunological devices is a dire warning to avoid even opening a book like this, which is surely a work of Satan." Here, of course, Dawkins flatters himself. Screwtape would have been far more insidious.

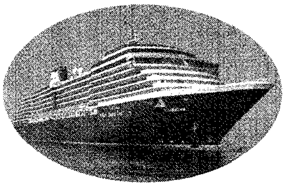
What most surprised me in the Dawkins book, however, is its defensiveness. He describes atheists, particularly in America, as suffering from loneliness, public disrespect, spiritual isolation, and low self-esteem. In one passage he recounts a letter from a young American medical student recently turning from Christianity to atheism. A medical student? Surely many of the doctors and scientists nearby are atheists. Nonetheless, the student writes: "I don't particularly want to share my belief with other people who are close to me because I fear the . . . reaction of distaste. . . . I only write to you because I hoped you'd sympathize and share in my frustration." In an appendix, which Dawkins kindly adds for such unsupported souls, he offers lists of organizations in which lonely atheists may find community and solace. He devotes not a few pages to boosting his community's morale—how large their numbers are, how smart they are, how comparatively disgusting their antagonists are.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF REASON

I have no doubt that Christians have committed many evils, and written some disgraceful pages in human history. Yet on a fair ledger of what Judaism and

THE NATIONAL REVIEW 2007

Alaska Cruise



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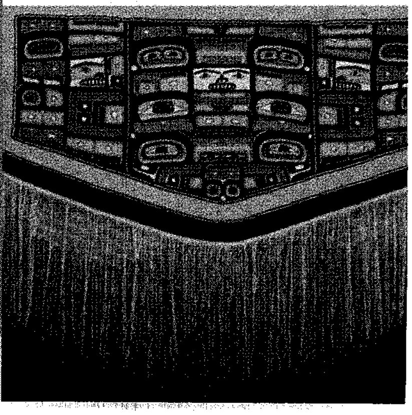
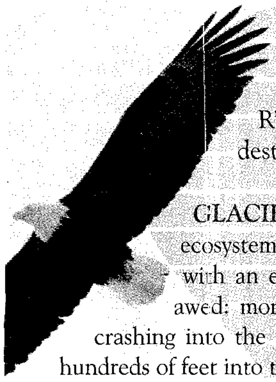
Wed./Aug. 1	Juneau, AK	7:00AM	8:00PM	evening cocktail reception
Thur./Aug. 2	Sitka, AK	8:00AM	5:00PM	late-night poolside smoker
Fri./Aug. 3	Ketchikan, AK	7:00AM	1:00PM	afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
Sat./Aug. 4	Victoria, B.C.	6:00PM	Midnight	morning seminar afternoon seminar
Sun./Aug. 5	Seattle	7:00AM		





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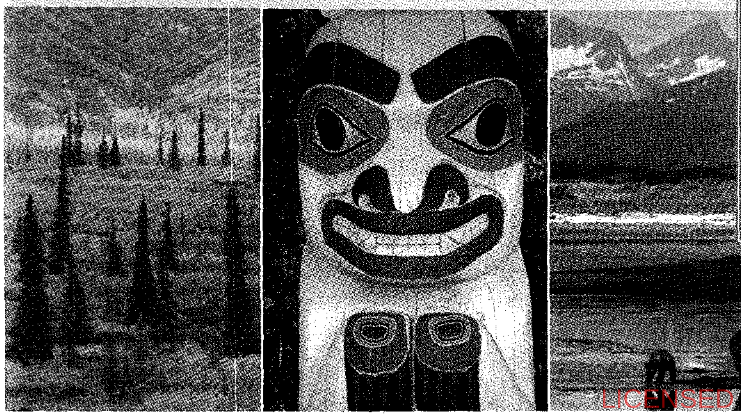

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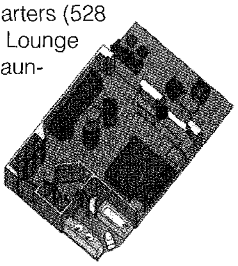

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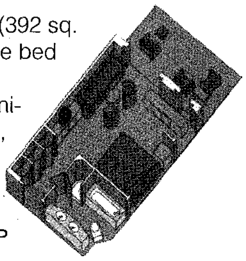

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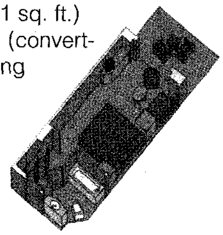

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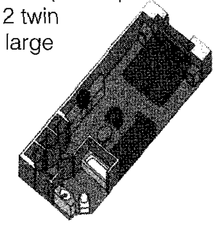

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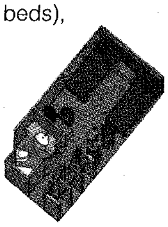

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Information and price quote on Cancellation Fee Waiver/Medical Insurance will accompany your statement. Cancellation Penalty Schedule follows (cancellations must be received in writing by the date indicated):

PRIOR *to February 27, 2007 cancellation penalty is $100 per person*
Febraury 27 to April 27, 2007cancellation penalty is $400 per person
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Cruise

(All rates are per person, double occupancy, and include all port charges and taxes, all gratuities, meals, entertainment, and *National Review* activities. Cruise-only rates include all of above except airfare and transfers. Failure to appear for embarkation for any reason constitutes a cancellation subject to full penalties. Personal items not included.)

PLEASE CHECK ALL APPLICABLE BOXES!

I. CABIN CATEGORY *(see list and prices on previous page)*

First cabin category choice:________ Second cabin category choice:________

Bedding: Beds made up as ☐ Twin ☐ King/Queen

BOOKING SINGLE? ☐ Please try to match me with a roommate. (My age: ___)

II. AIR/TRANSFER PACKAGES

☐ We will provide our own roundtrip air and transfers to and from Seattle.

☐ Include air with our package from ________________ (see list below).

☐ We need to purchase transfers from the airport to the ship at $42 per person.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

CITIZENSHIP: Is everyone a U.S. citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

DINING w/ FRIENDS/FAMILY: I wish to dine with ________________

☐ Every Night ☐ 3-4 times ☐ 2 times ☐ Once

IV. PRE- AND POST-CRUISE TOUR PACKAGES

☐ Please send me information on pre-/post-cruise packages in Seattle.

Important!

PASSPORT REQUIRED! *Everyone cruising, including children, will be required to bring* a valid passport. Current passports must be valid through February 6, 2008. Failure to *do so will result in being denied boarding of the Noordam.*

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AIR TRAVEL: You can simplify your air-travel arrangements by taking advantage of **Holland America's "Fly Cruise" Program**. The following per-person, economy-class prices for travel to and from the listed home city air gateways include transfers to and from the *Noordam* in Seattle, WA. First-Class air is available upon request. You cannot utilize frequent flyer points to upgrade these airfares to First Class.

AL	Birmingham	$746	FL	Miami	$656	MA	Boston	$666	NY	Rochester	$696	SD	Rapid City	$586
	Huntsville	$736		*Orlando*	$656	MI	*Detroit*	$696		Syracuse	$696		Sioux Falls	$836
	Mobile	$736		Pensacola	$656		Grand Rapids	$696	NC	Charlotte	$696	TX	Amarillo	$766
AK	Anchorage	$686		*Tallahassee*	$776		*Saginaw*	$706		*Greensboro*	$716		*Austin*	$566
AR	Little Rock	$686		Tampa	$676		Traverse City	$716		Raleigh/Durham	$726		Corpus Christi	$676
AZ	Phoenix	$456		West Palm Beach	$756	MN	Mnpls/St. Paul	$676	ND	*Bismark*	$736		*Dallas/Ft. Worth*	$586
	Tucson	$496	GA	Atlanta	$656		Rochester	$736		Fargo	$736		El Paso	$606
CA	Burbank	$426		Savannah	$776	MS	Jackson	$666	OK	Oklahoma City	$676		Houston	$546
	Fresno	$546	HI	Honolulu	$766	MO	Kansas City	$706		Tulsa	$666		Lubbock	$756
	Los Angeles	$416	ID	Boise	$476		Springfield	$676	OH	Akron/Canton	$676		Midland/Odessa	$756
	Oakland	$436	IL	Chicago	$676		St. Louis	$686		Cincinnati	$656		San Antonio	$576
	Ontario	$426		Moline	$686	MT	Billings	$506		Cleveland	$656	TN	Chattanooga	$706
	Orange County	$426		Peoria	$686		Bozeman	$486		Columbus	$676		Knoxville	$706
	Sacramento	$496	IN	Ft. Wayne	$686		Great Falls	$536		Dayton	$696		Memphis	$706
	San Diego	$446		Indianapolis	$656		Helena	$486	OR	Portland	$366		Nashville	$676
	San Francisco	$406	IA	Cedar Rapids	$676		Missoula	$486	PA	Allentown	$726	UT	Salt Lake City	$476
	San Jose	$436		Des Moines	$686	NE	Lincoln	$726		Harrisburg	$716	VT	Burlington	$676
	Santa Barbara	$506	KS	Wichita	$646		Omaha	$636		Philadelphia	$676	VA	Norfolk	$686
CO	Col. Springs	$606	KY	Lexington	$686	NV	Las Vegas	$476		Pittsburgh	$676		Richmond	$716
	Denver	$556		Louisville	$706		Reno	$536		Wilkes-Barre	$746	WA	Seattle	$384
CT	*Hartford*	$686	LA	Baton Rouge	$666	NJ	Newark	$656	PR	San Juan	$956		Spokane	$396
DC	Washington	$686		New Orleans	$636	NM	Albuquerque	$606	RI	Providence	$706	WI	Green Bay	$766
FL	*Ft. Lauderdale*	$656		*Shreveport*	$706	NY	Albany	$686	SC	Charleston	$676		Madison	$686
	Ft. Myers	$716	ME	Portland	$726		Buffalo	$656		Columbia	$696		Milwaukee	$676
	Jacksonville	$666	MD	*Baltimore*	$666		New York	$676		Greenville	$696			

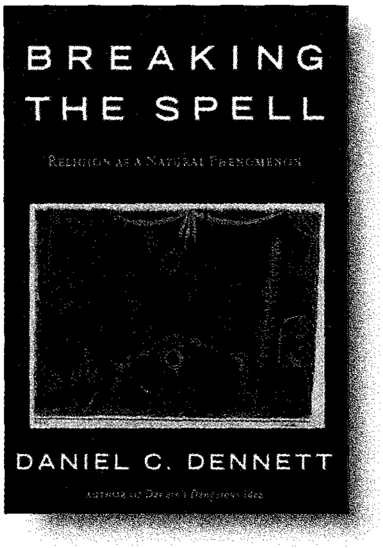
IMPORTANT NOTES: **1.** These air add-ons apply to the cruise or cruise + pre- or post-cruise package. All transfers for air/sea passengers are included. **2.** Should you elect to provide your own air transportation, note that transfers from the airport to the *Noordam* (Port of Seattle) are not included, but are available for purchase $42pp roundtrip. Schedule your arrival in San Diego (SEA) leaving plenty of time for flight delays! Arrive no later than 12:00noon on July 29th. Do not arrange return flights from Seattle before 12:00noon on August 5th. **3.** Should you wish to deviate your air from the "standard" schedule, Holland America Line charges $50pp (non-refundable) for this service. All requests must be sent in writing to The Cruise Authority. **4.** Special seat assignments or other requests must be made directly with the participating air carrier. You will receive your air schedule approximately 30 days prior to departure. **5.** Fees will apply to any changes to existing air reservations made within 65 days of travel or deletion/cancellation of the Fly-Cruise Plan from your booking within this same time period.

Christianity added to pagan Greece, Rome, the Arab nations (before Muhammad), the German, Frankish, and Celtic tribes, the Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons, one is puzzled not to find Dawkins giving thanks for many innovations: hospitals, orphanages, cathedral schools in early centuries, universities not much later, some of the most beautiful works of art—in music, architecture, painting, and poetry—in the human patrimony.

And why does he overlook the hard work on concepts such as "person," "community," "civitas," "consent," "tyranny," and "limited government" ("Give to Caesar what is Caesar's . . .") that made possible such great documents as the Magna Carta? His few pages on the founding and nourishing of his own beloved Oxford by its early Catholic patrons are mockingly ungrateful. And if Oxford disappoints him, has he no gratitude for the building of virtually every other old and famous university of Europe (and the Americas)?

Dawkins writes nothing about the great religious communities founded for the express purpose of building schools for the free education of the poor. Nothing about the thousands of monastic lives dedicated to the delicate and exhausting labor of copying by hand the great manuscripts of the past—often with the lavish love manifested in illuminations—during long centuries in which there were no printing presses. Nothing about the founding of the Vatican Library and its importance for the genesis of nearly a dozen modern sciences. Nothing about the learned priests and faithful who have made so many crucial discoveries in science, medicine, and technology. Yet on these matters a word or two of praise from Dawkins might have made his tiresome lists of accusations seem less unfair.

I don't wish to overdo it. There have been and are toxic elements in religion that always need restraint by the *Logos* to which Christianity from the very first married the Biblical tradition: "In the beginning was the *Logos* . . ." (John 1:1). Still, any fair measuring of the impact of Judaism and Christianity on world history has an awful lot of positives to add to the ledger. Among my favorite texts for many years, in fact, are certain passages of Alfred North Whitehead—in *Science and the Modern World* and *Adventures of Ideas*, for instance. In these passages, Whitehead points out that the practices of modern science are inconceivable apart from thousands of years of tutelage under the Jewish and Christian conviction that the Creator of all things understood all things, in their general laws and in their particular, contingent dispositions. This conviction, Whitehead writes, made long, disciplined efforts to apply reason to the sustained Herculean task of understanding all things seem reasonable. If all things are intelligible to their Creator, they ought to be intelligible to those made in His image, who in imitation of Him press onward in the human vocation to try to understand all that He has made.


BREAKING
THE SPELL
Religion as a Natural Phenomenon
DANIEL C. DENNETT
Author of Darwin's Dangerous Idea

In addition, Judaism and Christianity have inculcated in entire cultures specific intellectual and moral habits, synthesizing them with the teachings of ancient classical traditions, without which the development of modern sciences would lack the requisite moral disciplines—honesty, hard work, perseverance in the face of difficulties, a respect for serendipity and sudden insight, a determination to test any hypotheses asserted. What would modern science be without belief in the intelligibility of all things, even contingent, unique, and unrepeatable events, and without culture-wide habits of honesty, intellectual rigor, and persevering inquiry? Whitehead pointed to this marvelous indebtedness many times, much more generously than Dawkins. In *Science and the Modern World* (1925), he wrote: "My explanation is that the faith in the possibility of science, generated antecedently to the development of modern scientific theory, is an unconscious derivation from medieval theology."

The path of modern science was made straight and smooth by deep convictions that every stray element in the world of human experience—from the number of hairs on one's head to the lonely lily in the meadow—is thoroughly known to its Creator and, therefore, lies within a field of intelligibility, mutual connection, and multiple logics. All these odd and angular levels of reality, given arduous, disciplined, and cooperative effort, are in principle penetrable by the human mind. If human beings are made in the image of the Creator, as the first chapters of the Book of Genesis insist that they are, surely it is in their capacities to question, to gain insight, and to advance in understanding of the works of God. In the great image portrayed by Michelangelo on the Sistine ceiling—the touch from finger to finger between the Creator and Adam—the mauve cloud behind the Creator's head is painted in the shape of the human brain. *Imago Dei*, yes indeed.

Had Professor Dawkins made even a semi-serious pretense of fairness, I would have thought much more carefully about his criticisms of Christian peoples. Yet some of his criticisms of particular Christian deeds and ways of thinking have real bite. Christianity did not come to remove from human beings all capacity to sin, and simply being Christian gives no exemption from awful human sinfulness, of which in history there are sickening examples. Sin, unreason, betrayal—to Jews and Christians nothing human is alien.

I wish I could write that Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris are more open and respectful than Dawkins; but their books, too, were disappointments. The letter that Harris claims is intended for a Christian nation is in fact wholly uninterested in Christianity on any level, is hugely ignorant, and essentially represents his own love letter to himself, on account of his being superior to the stupid citizens among whom he lives. Dennett's concept of reason and science is so narrow that he seems trapped in something like early-period A. J. Ayer. Let us hope that some brave and caring soul can one day lead him by the hand, out of his sheltered cave. His main thesis, that religion is a "natural phenomenon," was already hoary by the time St. Augustine was discerning what novelties Christianity introduced to classical Roman religion. But, of course, Dennett's idea of "natural" is not large enough to comprehend even the heroic fidelity of Natan Sharansky, nor the timeless, liberating power of King David's poignant Psalms.

All this taken into account, it strikes me that the only way to proceed is to lay out, on one side, the way in which young questioning minds in American universities are repelled by the atheism that is the lingua franca of nearly all classrooms and academic discussions, and, on the other side, a very brief confession of what exactly that Christianity is that Dennett, Harris, and Dawkins find distasteful, evil, dangerous, and disgusting. Despite their disrespect, Christianity manages somehow to be highly attractive to approximately one-third of the population of the world (just over two billion persons), and is still today the fastest growing of all religions. It is important to explain that attraction before addressing their specific objections.

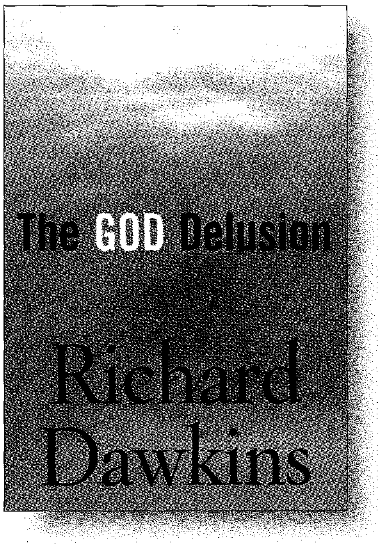
MY AGNO-THEISTIC DAUGHTER, AND HOW SHE GOT THAT WAY

A few years back, our daughter revealed to us that she was "an agno-theist." (Every well-ordered Catholic family should have one.) When she went off to Duke, she thought she was an atheist. She certainly found plenty of atheism in the air there. Not that everybody was atheist; far from it. Only that the working assumption in practically all public discourse was that every serious person is an atheist. Thoughtful religious people kept quiet about their own beliefs.

Yet it didn't take my daughter long to see through the pretenses of atheism. In the first place, the fundamental doctrine seemed to be that everything that is, came to be through chance and natural selection. In other words, at bottom, everything is irrational, chancy, without purpose or ultimate intelligibility. What got to her most was the affectation of professors pretending that everything is ultimately absurd, while in more proximate matters putting all their trust in science, rationality, and mathematical calculation. She decided that atheists could not accept the implications of their own metaphysical commitments. While denying the principle of rationality "all the way down," they wished to cling to all the rationalities on the surface of things. My daughter found this unconvincing.

She decided that atheism cannot be true, because it is self-contradictory. Moreover, this self-contradiction is willful, and its latent purpose is pathetically transparent. Atheists want all the comforts of the rationality that emanates from rational theism, but without personal indebtedness to any Creator, Governor, Judge. That is why they allow themselves to be rationalists only part of the way down. The alternative makes them very nervous.

My daughter concluded that it was more reasonable to believe that there is a God, who made all things. But she couldn't figure out how this made any difference to her personally. Why did such a god care about her, or anything else? What practical difference did such a god make in the world? Besides, she wasn't at all sure how even to think of such a god, whether as image or as concept. About all these things she found herself agnostic. That's why she called herself an "agno-theist."



It seemed odd to my daughter that there can be so much reason in the world, while there is no reason *for* the world, even with its manifest irrationalities. (She herself painfully experienced many irrational tragedies among her so-promising, intelligent, gifted friends, prematurely struck down in their youth.) Our daughter is no Pollyanna. She has always been perceptive of the dark, irrational side of life. What surprises her is the degree of rationality in all things, not the presence of absurdities. What surprised her in her professors was the self-contradiction at the root of their lives.

THE REAL CHRISTIANITY

In an inn in the little village of Bressanone (Brixen) in northern Italy, there is a fresco painted many centuries ago, whose main subject is an elephant, by a painter who had obviously never seen an elephant. Clearly, he was trying to represent on the wall what someone had tried to tell him about elephants. He painted a large, heavy horse, with unusually floppy ears, and a nose considerably longer than that of an average horse—but still a horse's long nose.

We used to smile at that fresco, and similarly the Christian reader will smile at the primitive fresco of Christianity painted by Dawkins, Dennett, and Harris. They miss the real thing by a country mile.

One does not experience the real thing simply by being born into a Christian home, either. It is far from sufficient to perform certain boring rituals, and to attend "Sunday school" with an inattentive and unquestioning mind. As Cardinal Newman laid out in some detail in his *Grammar of Assent*, a broad and shimmering gulf separates "notional" from "real" assent. For the latter, one has to think about one's faith, question it from all sides, study its dimensions, implications, and relations with other modes of knowing. One has to "make it one's own." One cannot just be "thrown" into it by birth and early instruction. Faith that is not nurtured under trial and severe questioning is a little like grass in thin soil, which is fresh in the morning, wilts in the afternoon, and dies before twilight. Our authors, it seems, want to rake up the most shallowly rooted grass.

Thus it seems useful—and necessary—to sketch out some of the facets of Christian faith to which our atheist threesome seems inattentive. Each Christian (and each Catholic) sees this differently, of course, but right off the bat I notice four questions on which Christian faith offers arresting reflections.

One: A Theology of the Absurd. Begin with the bloody cross of Calvary. On this gibbet dies the Son of God? The cross is the very symbol of contradiction, and the absurd. When Christians speak of the act of Creation, we do not think of a perfectionist artificer making Lladró dolls, but rather of God creating flesh and blood in all its angularity, deformations, imperfections, and concrete limitations. The world of His creation is riven through with absurdities and contradictions, species that die out, and the teeming, blooming, buzzing confusion of contingencies and chance. When He singles out a chosen people, He picks a small and difficult tribe in a poor, backward, and underdeveloped part of the world (immensely talented to be sure, but not prestigious, famous, powerful, or on the surface of things influential). His chosen ones are overrun by enemies again and again, and carted off into slavery and exile for long, long years. Then, when the Creator sends His Son to become flesh, the Son also roots His new community mainly among the poor, the uneducated, the humble, the forgotten.

But then, blasphemy is added to blasphemy, and this Son of God is condemned to death as a common criminal, and forced into the most disgraceful sort of death known to men of that time: public mockery, a scourging virtually unto death, and then put out to hang on a cross where the public can shout insults, until the vultures come to pick at his eyes.

This is not a Pollyanna, this Creator. But what He does do is assure those who suffer and who groan under the weight of the Absurd that, though at times they feel icy fear, they do not in the end need to be afraid. God is a good God, and has His own purposes, and it is no mistake to trust His kindness, ever. The Creator did not make us to face a reasonable world in a rational, calm, and dispassionate way—like a New York banker after a splendid lunch at his Club, sunk into his favorite soft chair in the Library, where a fragrant cigar is still permitted, as he comfortably reads his morning papers. Instead, there is war, exile, torture, injustice. Life is to be understood as a trial, and a time of suffering. A vale of tears. A valley of death. Even in the bosom of wealth, and luxury, and plenty, cancer and failure and radical loneliness strike; but even more often, simple boredom.

Not at all a land of happy talk, not at all the perfect world of *Candide*. Atheism is in the main for comfortable men, in a reasonable world. For those in agony and distress, Christianity has seemed to serve much better and for a longer time, not because it offers "consolation" but precisely because it does not. For Christians, the cross is inescapable, and one ought always to be prepared to take it up. I myself have watched three deeply religious people die without consolation, bereft, empty of feeling for God. To be empty of consolation, however, is not to be empty of faith. Faith is essentially a quiet act of love, even in misery: "Be it done to me according to thy will."

Like Stephen Jay Gould, our three authors think they are destroying the argument from design by showing how poorly designed are so many parts of human anatomy, how many species have perished since the beginning of time (something like 99 percent), how chancily and seemingly without reason so many steps in natural selection are taken. They want to show that if there is a Designer, he is an incompetent one; or, more exactly, that there is too much evidence of lack of design. What kind of maudlin artificer do they think God is? Our God is the God of the Absurd, of night, of suffering, and silent peace.

Two: The Burden of Sin. It took me some years, but I have come to understand that, just as some people have no ear for music, so others (as Friedrich Hayek put it) "have no ear for God." Still others say they have no "need" of God. They sense in themselves no round hole into which God fits. It seems to be, further, one of the blessings of atheism that it takes away any sense of Judgment, any sense that by one's actions one may be offending a Friend, any awareness of sin. "Sin" seems, indeed, to be a leftover from a bygone age. *Beati voi!* I want to cry out to atheists. Lucky you.

"At the heart of Christianity is the sinner," a very great Christian once said. Some are aware of doing things that we know we ought not to have done, and of not doing things that we know we ought to have done. We are aware of sinning against our own conscience—deliberately doing what we know to be wrong, whether from weakness or from a powerful desire that is still out of control. Afterwards, sometimes, we feel a remorse so keen that it hurts—and yet what has been done is done, and nothing we now do can take that fault away. And at times the fault is shamefully grave, at that.

It is to this common, virtually universal experience that Jesus, like John the Baptist before him, first addressed his auditors. "Be sorry! Do penance. Resolve not to sin again." (Even though the probabilities of sinning again are high, just as a man with a gimpy knee, though his knee has healed, knows that at any time it may again go out on him.)

MICE

We love to stream across the floor of night
in a rumination of sound the wind
clears its throat with before it begins.

Damn neat to have a nose like a pencil-
point madly sketching and four vestigial
feet to blur the breathless seeds

our little beanbag bodies shell out.
What a glorious, snappy wave of self-
awareness, to live in the corner of the eye,

to funnel through the tissue of lies
our mother moon won't look in on
or question, to whip along by a tail and

hug the baseboards of the true believers,
lining crumbs up end to end to end
and dreaming big, baby, always big.

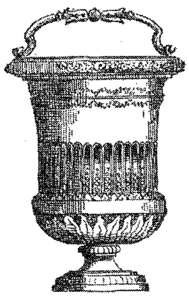
—TED GILLEY

Christianity is not about moral arrogance. It is about moral realism, and moral humility. Wherever you see self-righteous persons condemning others and unaware of their own sins, you are not in the presence of an alert Christian but of a priggish pretender. It was in fact a great revolution in human history when the Jewish and Christian God revealed Himself as one who sees directly into consciences, and is not misled merely by external acts. (Pagan philosophers in Greece or Rome might or might not have taken the gods seriously, but often had no qualms about showing *pietas* at religious rites by their physical presence, unconcerned about conscience.) The Biblical respect for conscience greatly dignified and honored inner acts of reflection, commitment, and choice. It turned a powerful beam of attention away from the external act to the inner act of conscience. It greatly honored truthfulness and simple humility. Eventually, the inner duty of conscience toward the Creator became the ground of religious liberty—no other power dare intervene in this primal duty to God, which is antecedent to civil society, state, family, and any other institution. (See Jefferson's "Statute of Religious Liberty," 1785.)

Three: The Bright Golden Thread of Human History. In the liberation of the Jews from the Seleucid Empire (celebrated at Hanukkah), from Egypt (celebrated at the Passover), and from Babylon (celebrated in the poetry of Israel's prophets), liberty is the main theme of the Jewish Testament. Every story in that Testament has at its axis the arena of the human will, and the decisions made there (whether hidden or external). Thus, for Biblical religion, liberty is the golden thread of human history. This conception of liberty is realized internally in the recesses of the soul and also institutionally in whole societies or polities.

No other world religions except Christianity and Judaism have put liberty of conscience so close to the center of religious life. For instance, Islam tends to think of God in terms of divine will, quite apart from nature or logic. Independent of reason, whatever Allah *wills*, occurs. Judaism and Christianity tend to think of God as *Logos*, light, source of all law and the intelligibility of all things. This difference in the fundamental conception of God alters, as well, the fundamental conception each religion has of the human being: understanding, or submission.

Four: The Point of the Cosmos Is Friendship. If it has ever occurred to you to ask, even if you are an atheist, why did God create this vast, silent, virtually infinite cosmos, you might find your best answer in the single word "friendship." According to the Scriptures, intelligently read, the Creator made man a little less than the angels, a little more complex than the other animals. He made human beings conscious enough, and reflective enough, that they might marvel at what He had wrought, and give Him thanks. Even more than that, He made human beings in order to offer to them, in their freedom, His friendship and companionship. If there is no liberty, there can be no friendship.



Friendship is not only the Biblical way of thinking about the relationship between God and man; it is also a good way to imagine the future for our nation and for the world that we should work towards. From this vision, Judaism and Christianity imparted to the world a way of measuring progress and decline. William Penn called his capital city "Philadelphia" and made freedom of religion its first principle. Even the atheists of the French Revolution named their fundamental principles "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality"—each of them a term that derives not from the Greeks or the Romans, but from Biblical religion. A worldwide civilization of mutual friendship is a powerful magnet, and a realistic measure. Friendship does not require uniformity. On the contrary, its fundamental demand is mutual respect, willing the good of the other as other. It births a desire to converse in a reasonable way about fundamental differences in viewpoint, hope, and a sense of practical responsibility.

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ATHEISM

I recognize that the Christian horizon sketched above in broad strokes may seem preposterous to such atheists as Dawkins, Dennett, and Harris. They may look in vain for empirical evidence, of the sort they are able to recognize as evidence, that this sketch of God and man can even in a minimal way be in touch with reality as they know it. On the other hand, it is not so difficult for a serious Christian to stand in the moccasins of an atheist, and to see the world as atheists see it. The four principles of the paradigm sketched above—friendship, liberty, the forgiveness of sin, the acceptance of absurdity—do not exclude the viewpoint of the atheist. In fact, one learns a great deal about each principle from the writings of atheists, including Sartre, Camus, Silone, Moravia, Dewey, Seneca, Aristotle, and thousands of others in between. It seems that Christianity is better able to account for, and to sympathize with, the contemporary atheist than the latter is able to sympathize with the Christian. If nothing else, the three books under review show how hard it is for the contemporary atheist (of the scientific school) to show much sympathy for a Christian way of seeing reality. Since just over two billion persons on our planet today are Christians—about one in every three persons on earth—the inability of the contemporary atheist to summon up fellow feeling for so many companions on the brief voyage of a single human life seems to be a severe human handicap.

Again, it is not difficult for the serious Christian to "put on" the viewpoint, methods, and disciplines of evolutionary biology. Thousands of religious graduate students do so each year. One simply has to limit one's attention and understanding to what that discipline counts as evidence and methodological rigor. One has to master its concepts and important axioms. One has to limit one's point of view, and the sorts of questions one asks (no use asking questions that go beyond the strict limits imposed by the discipline itself). If you can live within these limits, all the easier.

The art of doing so is not altogether different from learning to think as an ancient Greek, or for Catholics to learn how to look at things as a Baptist, a Lutheran, and a Presbyterian, or for the last named to stand provisionally in the moccasins of a Catholic. The odd way in which Dawkins, Dennett, and Harris understand human life is something the sensitive believer must necessarily learn along the way. I cannot imagine getting through graduate studies at Harvard, teaching at Stanford and other universities, without learning how to think, and speak, and work within the horizon, viewpoints, methods, and disciplines of the atheist.

Nor is this art solely the product of our modern pluralistic age. The young Thomas Aquinas, in his late twenties, was one of the first men in the West to have in his hands an authentic translation of several key books of Aristotle, whose original Greek versions had been lost for over a thousand years. As his extended line-by-line commentaries on some of these show, Aquinas mastered a viewpoint quite foreign to his own. Not many years after, he had to do the same in reading al-Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes, and other major Arab philosophers.

And so, when a Christian reader comes across Professor Dawkins's argument that God cannot exist, because all complex and more intelligent things come only at the end of the evolutionary process, not at the beginning, the Christian's first reflex may be to burst out laughing—but as an attentive student, he is also obliged to observe that, yes, from the viewpoint of evolutionary biology, that must in fact be so. The argument may not be intellectually or philosophically satisfying; when its practical implications are compared with those of the Christian viewpoint, evolutionary biology may not be attractive as a way of life. If one wants to be an evolutionary biologist, however, one must learn to confine oneself within the disciplines that that field imposes.

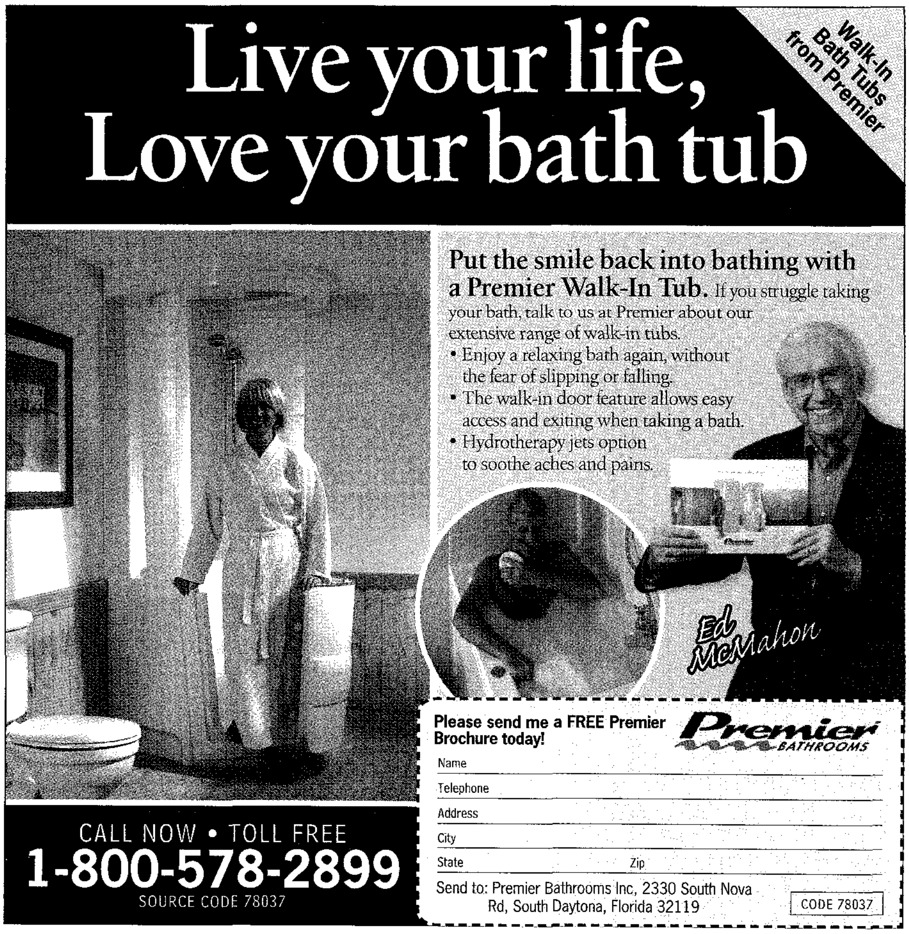
From a Roman Catholic point of view, at least, there is no difficulty in accepting all the findings of evolutionary biology, while not accepting evolutionary biology as more than an empirical science—that is to say, not as a philosophy of existence, a metaphysics, a full vision of human life. It is easier for Christianity to absorb many, many findings of the contemporary world—from science to technology, politics, economics, and art—than for those whose viewpoint is confined to the contemporary era to absorb Christianity. That is just one reason we may expect the latter to outlive the former.

It is obvious that Dawkins, at least, is quite aware of the conventional limitations of the scientific atheist's point of view. He writes that "a quasi-mystical response to nature and the universe is common among scientists and rationalists. It has no connection with supernatural belief." A few pages of his book, in almost every section, are given over to showing how an atheistic point of view can satisfy what have hitherto been taken to be religious longings. Atheism, too, he shows, has its consolations, its sources of inspiration, its awareness of beauty, its sense of wonder. For such satisfactions, there is no need to turn to religion. Dawkins does good work in restoring human subjectivity, emotion, longing, and an awed response to beauty to the life of scientific atheism. For Dawkins, scientific atheism is humanistic, a significant step forward from the sterile logical positivism of two or three generations ago.

. . . OR ALL IS PERMITTED

But atheism has a more severe limitation, one that shows itself in the actions of its proponents. One of my favorite parts of the Sam Harris book is his attempt to explain away the horrors of the self-declared atheist regimes in modern history: Fascist in Italy, Nazi in Germany, and Communist in the Soviet Union. Never in history have so many Christians been killed, tortured, driven to their deaths in forced marches, and imprisoned in concentration camps. An even higher proportion of Jews suffered more greatly under the same regimes, particularly the Nazi regime, than at any other time in history. The excuse Harris offers is quite lame. First he directs attention away from the declared character of the regime, toward the personalities of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin: "While it is true that such men are sometimes enemies of organized religion, they are never especially rational. In fact, their public pronouncements are often delusional. . . . The problem with such tyrants is not that they reject the dogma of religion, but that they embrace other life-destroying myths."

In other words, delusional atheists are not really atheists. Would Harris accept a claim by Christians that Christian evil-



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doers are not really Christian? The real problem is not that tyrants reject the "dogma" of religion, but that they splash around in the bloodshed permitted by the ultimate relativism of all things. And they are comforted by the "natural law" that *they* imbibe from old-fashioned Darwinism: that the strongest must survive, and the weak must perish.

Our authors may dismiss the argument that atheism is associated with relativism. Nonetheless, the most common argument against placing trust in atheists is Dostoevsky's: "If there is no God, everything is permitted." There will be no Judge of deeds and consciences; in the end, it is each man for himself. To be sure, some individual atheists "of a peculiar character" and academic distinction, brought up in habits inculcated by the religious cultures of the past, can go on for two or three generations living in ways hard to distinguish from those of unassuming Christians and Jews. These individuals continue to be honest, compassionate, committed to the equality of all, and firm believers in "progress" and "brotherhood," long after they repudiate the original religious justification for this particular list of virtues. But sooner or later a generation may come along that takes the metaphysics of atheism with deadly seriousness. This was the fate of a highly cultivated nation in the Europe of our time.

Let us recall George Washington's Farewell Address:

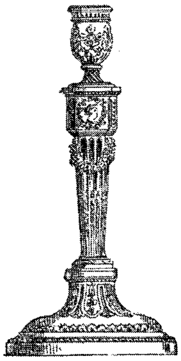
> Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

If morality were left to reason alone, common agreement would never be reached, since philosophers vehemently—and endlessly—disagree, and large majorities would waver without clear moral signals. Moreover, in times of stress distinguished intellectuals such as Heidegger and various precursors of postmodernism (notably deconstructionist Paul de Man) displayed a shameless adaptation to Nazi or Communist imperatives.

Dawkins attempts to get around this flaw in the neo-Darwinian view of chance and blind natural selection by counting out four reasons for altruism rooted in evolutionary biology:

> First, there is the special case of genetic kinship. Second, there is reciprocation: the repayment of favours given, and the giving of favours in "anticipation" of payback. . . . Third, the Darwinian benefit of acquiring a reputation for generosity and kindness. And fourth, there is the particular additional benefit of conspicuous generosity as a way of buying authentic advertising.

To these reasons based upon nature's egotism, Jews and Christians would add three or four others. First, not to love one another is to disappoint the Creator who wishes us to be His friends. Second, it is a failure to imitate the Lord Jesus, who asked us to follow Him. Third, experience confirms that loving others is in tune with a communal dimension of our nature, beginning in the family, but radiating outward through the polity and the economy. (Adam Smith referred to this highest law as "sympathy.") Fourth, there is no doubt that every Christian command has a foundation in nature, but tends to stretch nature's outer limits. Christian faith does not reject, but builds upon nature, adds to it, brings it to a richer perfection.



Finally, our three authors fail to think carefully about what Jews and Christians actually have to say about God. Their own atheistic concept of God is a caricature, an ugly godhead which anybody might feel duty-bound to reject. Dawkins makes fun of an omniscient God who would also be free. If an omniscient God knows now what future actions He will take, how will that leave room for Him to change His mind—and how does that leave Him omnipotent? Isn't He caught in a kind of vise? But, of course, this is to imagine God living in time as Dawkins lives in time. It is to fail to grasp the difference between a viewpoint from eternity, outside time, and a viewpoint from within time. It is also to fail to grasp the freedom that the Primary Cause, outside of time (simultaneous to every moment of it), may allow within time crucial roles to secondary causes, to contingencies, and to particulars.

God's will is not *before* human decisions are made. Rather, it is simultaneous with them, and thus empowers their being made. When Catholics celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass, for example, we imagine that our moment of participation in that Mass—as it is on every other day of our lives—is in God's eyes simultaneous with the bloody death of His Son on Calvary. In our eyes, it looks like a "re-enactment," but in God's eyes both moments are as one. No doubt, for some minds this is all too mystical, and its underlying philosophy a bit too sophisticated, especially to those of literal and purely empirical tastes. Our three authors, in any case, present a quite primitive idea of God. If the rest of us had such a view, we, too, would almost certainly be atheists.

The whole inner world of aware and self-questioning religious persons seems to be territory unexplored by our authors. All around them are millions who spend many moments each day (and hours each week) in communion with God. Yet of the silent and inward parts of these lives—and why these inner silences ring to those who share them so true, and seem more grounded in reality than anything else in life—our writers seem unaware. Surely, if our atheist friends were to reconsider their methods, and deepen their understanding of such terms as "experience" and "the empirical," they might come closer to walking for a tentative while in the moccasins of so many of their more religious companions in life, who find theism more intellectually satisfying—less self-contradictory, less alienating from their own nature—than atheism.

The only way human beings can come to understand each other is by learning, out of mutual respect, how to stand in each other's shoes. If that maxim of Habermas is true, we might wish our three authors had done more, from their side, to close the great divide between belief and unbelief in the human spirit of our time. Still, we can be grateful that our authors have opened a window into the souls of atheists, so that the rest of us might better understand what the world looks like from their point of view—and even to see ourselves for a while as they see us. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Office Politics

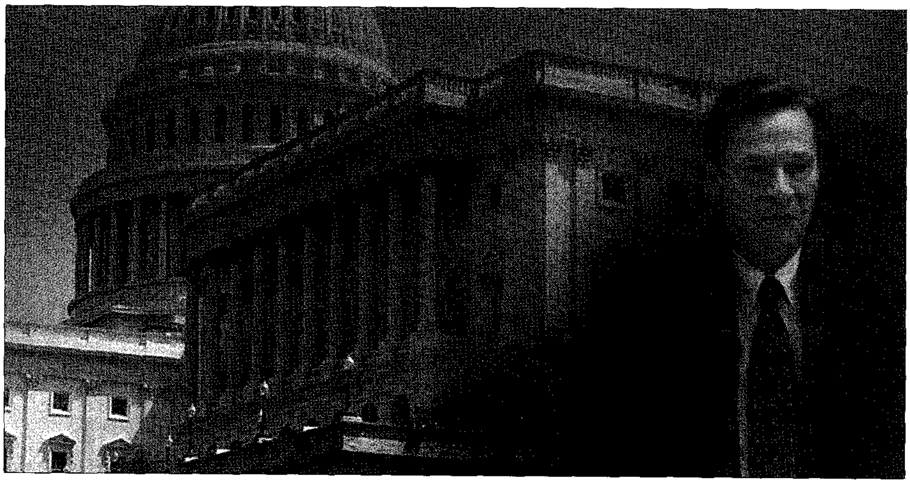
ROSS DOUTHAT

Four years ago, the writer-director Billy Ray made a strange, transfixing little movie called *Shattered Glass*, about *The New Republic*'s famous fabricator, Stephen Glass. A scandal at a Washington political magazine seemed, on its face, the least cinematic subject imaginable, but somehow Ray turned out a film that was not only a pitch-perfect portrait of an unctuous climber's fall from grace, but a careful, almost anthropological look at the peculiar, rivalrous culture of twentysomething D.C. journalism, where everyone's a friend and everyone's a competitor, and false modesty is the coin of the realm. *Shattered Glass* offered a perfect dramatic counterpoint, in a way, to the comedic brilliance of a comic strip like *Dilbert* or a television show like *The Office*, mining the working world's idiosyncrasies and anxieties for tension and trauma instead of belly laughs.

Now Ray is back with another Washington workplace drama, and this time he's after bigger game—instead of a twentysomething fabulist, there's a fifty-something traitor, the FBI turncoat Robert Hanssen, and instead of a magazine's reputation, there's America's national security at stake. But *Breach*, which has a glowering Chris Cooper as Hanssen and Ryan Phillippe as the FBI trainee assigned to monitor him, is ultimately concerned with the same issues as *Shattered Glass*: the ambitions and resentments of office life, and how they shape the trajectory of a single, particularly pathological career. Ray's earlier movie turned on an editor's suspicions of his charming-but-smarmy subordinate; this one turns on a subordinate's suspicions of his gruff-but-likeable boss. The earlier film depicted a talented employee who went astray because he became addicted to praise and favor from his superiors; *Breach* depicts a talented employee who turned traitor because he was smarter than his superiors, and never got the credit he deserved.

Robert Hanssen's sins were far greater than Stephen Glass's, obviously, and he was a far more interesting character as well: a devout Opus Dei Catholic who dabbled in amateur pornography (filming himself making love to his wife without her knowledge, among other charming pastimes) in addition to selling more than two decades' worth of secrets to the Russians. But in spite of this piquant subject matter, Ray's second D.C. movie turns out to be duller than his first. Where *Shattered Glass*'s plot had the arc of a mystery story, with Peter Sarsgaard as a *New Republic* editor gradually grinding his way down to the truth, in *Breach* the mystery of Hanssen has already been solved by the time Phillippe's Eric O'Neill is assigned to work with him, and the only question is when his FBI superior (Laura Linney, typecast as usual in a miserable-career-gal role) will let O'Neill in on the secret, and then whether they can catch Hanssen in the act. So the movie's tension hinges entirely on the interplay between the two men—O'Neill's growing affection for his boss before he learns the truth about him, and then afterward his attempts to use their friendship to manipulate Hanssen into giving himself away. This places a tremendous burden on the script and the two male leads, and neither Phillippe—bland and unremarkable as usual—nor the screenwriters are quite up to the challenge.

The trouble is that *Breach*'s plot requires Hanssen to be seductive as well as strange, to make it plausible that O'Neill would bond with him and make the audience feel drawn to him as well. But it's obvious, throughout, that while the film wants us to believe that O'Neill would be attracted to Hanssen's traditionalist Catholic lifestyle, the filmmakers themselves find the whole Opus Dei business by turns hilarious—Cooper is saddled with a series of dumb right-wing jokes about lesbians and Hillary Clinton—and deeply, deeply creepy. (Those veils! Those rosaries!) So *Breach* shows us Hanssen seducing his subordinate, but it doesn't make the seduction seem particularly plausible, which robs the movie's turning point—the moment when O'Neill has to come to grips with his newfound mentor's treachery—of the gut-punch quality it ought to pack.



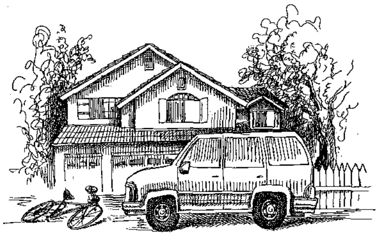
Chris Cooper in Breach

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

This leaves Hanssen himself to hold our interest, and the contradictions he contained—the piety and the corruption, the patriotism and the treachery. But the movie keeps its subject at arm's length, and Cooper's clenched, pursed, resentful performance gives us the why of it—because he felt passed over, because he thought he was smarter than everyone else, because he enjoyed it—but not the how. We know what goaded him into treason, but not what sustained him in it; we see the lies he told others, but we never hear the lies he told himself. *Shattered Glass* likewise left its subject's inner life opaque, but in that film you had the sense that what you saw was all there was—that Glass's emptiness was his defining feature, and that there wasn't any more to know. Whereas *Breach* leaves Hanssen as it found him, with crucial secrets left untold: Near the end of the movie, we see him in the confessional, shaking and sobbing as he speaks—but we can't hear what he's saying. **NR**

■ THE STRAGGLER ■

Old School Tie



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

WINTER break, bringing with it the school reports. I do my parently best with these, but rarely to much consequence. There was a semester a year or two ago when my son's grade plummeted dramatically in some area and we suspended his computer privileges for a month. That was the end of all major shifts. Now his grades hold steady, or at most go down or up one tick. Thus "Produces neat and legible work" has advanced from "S" ("satisfactory") to "G" ("good"). Then again, "Social Studies," which is marked on a different, numerical scale, sank from 4 to 3-plus. Words are exchanged between father and son, but neither shift seems to justify reward or punishment.

I find it hard, in any case, to take seriously a school subject named "Social Studies." Is the word "history" too loaded to be suitable for pedagogical purposes—too redolent of evil white people being beastly to soulful colored people in distant places? I suppose so; and I suppose this accounts for the disappearance of "Geography" from the syllabus, too. Heaven forbid our children should think anything good happened in times past, or that one part of the world is more important than another!

I confess to a certain cynical fatalism about our children's public-school education. Having beggared ourselves to buy a house in a decent school district, I feel we have done most of what we can do. The kids will learn, or not, according mainly to their own inclinations and abilities. The teachers, when we meet them, seem like decent types, but a child needs to be well-nigh homicidal before the teacher will say anything negative about him.

At our children's level—intermediate and middle school—education is a caucus race, in which every child is wonderful and all will get prizes. Somewhat later they will take an IQ test (it is called the SAT, but IQ and SAT scores correlate at around the 0.82 level), then be decanted into precisely the appropriate tier of the great American meritocracy as indicated by the result of that test. For the time being, though, everyone is equal and No Child will be Left Behind. Thus are reconciled two cherished, but unfortunately contradictory, American ideals: the first, that ability should be fully employed and fairly rewarded, and the second, that all are metaphysically equal in ability, the observed differences being mere illusions, most likely arising from some malign intent on the part of the observer. I sometimes wonder to myself, quietly, what will be the psychological effect on my kids of this faux egalitarianism. Cynicism, or double-think?

Musing over these documents and their mysterious graded categories ("Uses manipulatives effectively," for example; and I forgot to ask my daughter the meaning of "HM&CAR SK"), I think of my own school reports, moldering away somewhere in a box in the attic. My son was born 50 years and one month after myself, so that a comparison between his school report and mine will offer a neat glimpse across half a century of pedagogical history (or "Social Studies"). I head for the attic, pull out my own school reports, and turn to the one for spring term 1957.

English: ranked second in my form (that is, out of 34 boys). "He does his best at all times," remarked the teacher. Did I? And who was that teacher, with initials G. K. R.? The "R" was for Roberts, I am pretty sure. I dimly recall him—a young fellow, keen and innovative. A jazz fan—much later in my school career, he organized a trip for interested older boys to see Ella Fitzgerald perform in a nearby city.

Latin: ranked first in the form. Good grief—was I really so good at Latin? Yet now I cannot construe a line without help. The master's name was Hancock, but I recall very little else about him. He was another young fellow, but strict and sarcastic. He did, though, have a stock of what pass for jokes and puns in Latin class: *Caesar adsum jam forte, Pompey aderat*, that sort of thing.

I blush, in fact, to see what a good scholar I was. My subsequent life of underachievement recalls Cyril Connolly's melancholy reflection on his own schoolfellows: "Early laurels weigh like lead and of many of the boys whom I knew at Eton, I can say that their lives are over. Those who knew them then knew them at their best and fullest; now, in their early thirties, they are haunted ruins."

Not that placing first in Latin and second in English really amounted to laurels. Sport was the thing, and there I was a duffer. Our P.E. master did not give us a ranking; his only comment on my exertions that spring was a curt "S" for "Satisfactory."

That was Frank Sykes, a taciturn Yorkshireman, star winger on our town's rugby team, the Saints. He played for England, too, though I have forgotten the details. Frank was, I think, my first encounter with the relentlessly physical type of human being. I recall seeing him one hot summer's day playing strenuous tennis with himself against an outer wall of the gym. He was doing this, grunting with effort as he reached to return his own shots from the wall, when I passed on my way to some business at the Sea Cadets hut down below the school playing fields. When I returned two hours later, he was still doing it.

By now I am of course sinking into a glum nostalgia. Those last pre-adolescent years are the true Garden of Eden, from which we must all be expelled. For people of my generation in the West, they were also the last years of nationhood, when England was still England, with a Monarch, a Church, an Army, and a Navy. Probably the school gym has since been bulldozed to make way for a mosque, as History has been swept away in favor of Social Studies.

To repine is pointless, not to mention fogeyish, reactionary, and very likely "mean-spirited." As my children are no doubt taught, the past was a place of ugliness, ignorance, and civilizational crime, while the future is full of radiant promise. We march forward into that bright future, singing the *Internationale*, taking care that No Child is Left Behind. How I wish I could be! **NR**

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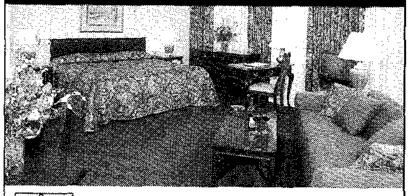

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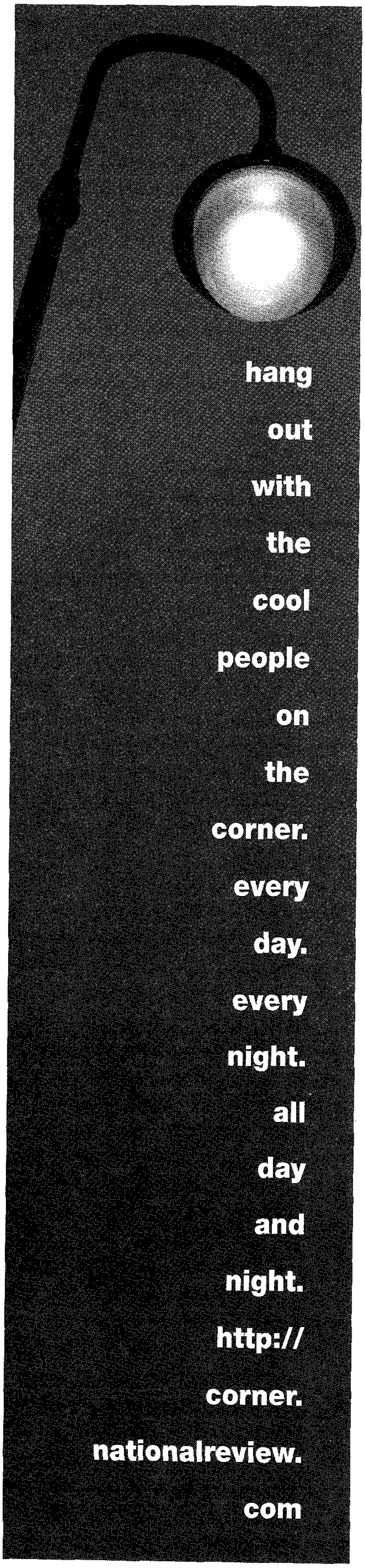


on the right

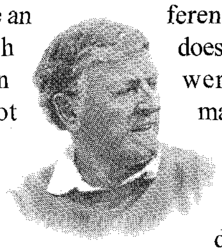
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Hillarymania

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 13

NOT having written before about her presidential campaign, maybe we can claim here a certain freshness on the matter of Mrs. Clinton. The entrance of Barack Obama into the Democratic race had a special bounce for the reason that the public inevitably deduced that an important advantage for him is that—Obama is not Hillary.

Her preeminence has been so well established as to pretty well efface other presumptive candidates. Obama was never one of those. In fact, one of his charms is the enormousness of his ambition. Because he is so young, because he is the ultimate racial hybrid, he is given a pretty solid welcome as a Democratic candidate. But all that the typical voter knows about him is that he made an electrifyingly successful speech at the Democratic Convention in 2004. That—and that he is not Hillary Clinton.



This edginess over Hillary requires that we probe the question: Why is it?

Well, one reason has to be that she married Bill Clinton. That should not be thought of as suicidally self-destructive. Somebody had to marry Bill Clinton.

But she not only married him, she stood by him athwart scandal after scandal. This is taken as fidelity of a singular sort, and it is exactly that. But does such fidelity imply a surrender to relativism? The adage is: I am for Harry through thick and thin. But being a faithful Mrs. Harry is a feat of personal durability not always admirable. If Bill had been caught traducing not Monica, but the local bank, would Hillary have been expected to stand by him?

Bill Clinton is perhaps the most effective politician in the history of the U.S., but he is certainly the most reprehensible. He swore untruths, deceived Congress, the courts, the public, and however many ladies he left unattended. His contributions to statecraft are unrecorded because there weren't any. The economy rose and fell and rose, as did threats of foreign disruptions. No detoxified area of the world owes its survival to an initiative of Bill Clinton, who presided over a foreign policy that permitted Osama bin Laden to gather strength undisturbed by any interference from the U.S. Marines or the Red Cross.

But Hillary was there, and when some people concluded that with the retirement of her husband she would lose the single prop on which she relied for public recognition, she slipped away for what seemed 15 minutes before announcing that she would run for the U.S. Senate. She won office and did so easily, in part because her opponent was simply unnoticeable.

One ground for nervousness, mostly unspoken because it is politically incorrect, is that Mrs. Clinton is a woman. According to measurements that spring from egalitarian premises, that makes no difference whatever, but of course it does. If a woman in the Oval Office were as commonplace as affirmations of the equality of women, one would expect there'd have been one before. So there has to have been prejudice—another word for prejudgment: i.e., it is better not to run the risk of electing a chief executive who goes to sleep at night while armed legions responsible for our safety feel the uncertainty of having a woman leader.

But vaulting over that prejudgment, in the age of Margaret Thatcher, what are the skeptics left with?

Well, she is sort of . . . left-wing, no?

Well, not entirely. In her early political life she was a cheerleader for Goldwater. If she had married George Wallace, and if he had then gone to the White House, is there any reason to suppose that she would not have espoused the views expected of Mrs. George Wallace?

There are those who point to her preposterous health plan as evidence of her ideological naïveté, her capacity to fondle statist models for dealing with social issues.

Well, yes, she is certainly a liberal. But there aren't any grounds for believing she is a hard-core socialist.

There are only grounds for believing that she is comfortable occupying positions that maximize her political popularity. She does this with a broad smile, a lovely face, and a piquant sense of destiny. Barack Obama has to pry out a position more central, and then center in on it. Either that, or find for the Democratic party some other, engaging view of what to do for our fatherland/motherland.

High Decision Time

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 20

PRESIDENT BUSH is uneasily situated as commander in chief of a nation at war. The first challenge of course is to win the war. But obstacles multiply, not so much in Iraq as in America.

In Iraq, the situation appears to be frozen. The insurgency seems to have been weakened by the resolute security measures of the past month, but the weakening is not to be confused with large steps toward defeat. We have faced, for several years, a wretched factor, identified as such by Donald Rumsfeld: The supply of insurgents is apparently self-generating. You kill one, and a replacement appears. For that reason Mr. Bush is without hard good news in his pocket, of the kind that would win political campaigns, let alone land wars.

And Bush is without the resources normally thought of as available to someone directing a war on behalf of the most powerful country in the world. Specifically, he has asked for 21,000 extra troops. But he has not been able to demonstrate that this augmentation in U.S. forces on the ground will provide a critical difference in the fortunes of war. And this makes it possible for GOP legislators to vote no, or contingently no, without running the risk of being held directly responsible for military defeat.

The situation is like that of the French in the Indochina war, where year after year there were more troops and more moneys spent, but, in the absence of dispositive gains, the situation just stalled—with the important difference that governments in France, in those days, changed every season or two, and with them, responsibility for the war.

Today, the Bush administration is the undeniably responsible party. Bush initiated the war, wages the war, and defends the war. Sen. John McCain began by criticizing tactical shortcomings in the conduct of the war (he wanted more troops years ago), but now satisfies himself with simply defending the war and speaking direfully of the results of abandoning it.

That makes for satisfactory Republican politics, but it is not really good enough to contend against Democratic opportunism. Hillary Clinton is saying that she thought it correct that we should have gone to war, given the intelligence on which we were relying. But, she says (persuasively), now that we have established that the intelligence was defective—Saddam didn't have weapons of mass destruction on Iraqi territory—we can pass historical revisionist judgment and admit that it was a bad idea to go to war.

So far so good, but behold the elasticity that lies beyond. So—says the candidate for president—what we need to do is responsibly contain that war. Mrs. Clinton is demanding evidence of military redeployment of U.S. troops within 90 days—and if that does not take place, then diminish congressional financing.

That is a fairly dreamy political position for a candidate to be in. (1) You show that you are a tough foreign-policy analyst willing to send troops if the situation warrants, as Mrs. Clinton thought it did in 2002; (2) you stand against abrupt abandonment of the war, establishing your strategic reliability; and (3) you don't challenge the commander in chief's authority; you simply assert control of the purse. The 90-day deadline is easily changed, if politically auspicious, to 100 days or, for that matter, 300 days.

Senator McCain's steadfastness is encouraging. But he desperately needs what Bush either can't give him, or won't give him. Bush doesn't want to make the mistake he made at the beginning, of arguing that victory is just around the corner. But in the absence of concrete good news on the conduct of the war, what can Bush give the voting public? America is an impatient society. Space exploration has been allowed to take an unspecified length of time. Not so a war against regional terrorists.

McCain has to apply his military experience to specify an acceptable measurement by which progress can be assessed. At one end is withdrawal—capitulation. At the other end, escalation at a drastic level, which means effective pressure on Iran to end its support of the insurgency.

McCain and Bush have to sort this thing out pretty soon, before the Iowa caucuses destroy them both.

Enter Reagan, 96

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 23

ANOTHER birthday has slid by—Ronald Reagan would have been 96 on February 6. Recent books on Reagan and his reign were not designed to celebrate the occasion, but one in particular cannot be read other than as celebrating Reagan.

John Patrick Diggins is a professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He has written many books, including one that celebrates the achievements of the American Left. Diggins is not, in other words, a member of the Reagan camp; rather, a historian who surprises by his imagination and fluent capacity to integrate the figure he is looking at into the folds of distinctly American traditions.

In *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*, Diggins identifies Reagan as an Emersonian: that is, as following in the tradition of the Transcendentalist of pre–Civil War days who preached the doctrine of human freedom and self-fulfillment as the fruit of our likeness to God.

Diggins believes that Reagan was most remarkable for his optimism. When Reagan declared, in 1984, that it was "morning in America," he was living out his mandate as an Emersonian, greeting each day with the joy that is natural on reminding oneself that God, no less, created you and that you serve him by expressing the joy in every morning as you absorb, and even reflect, divine generosity.

Diggins lobs a good-sized bomb into the ranks of the routine detractors of Reagan ("an amiable dunce" was Clark Clifford's contribution to the Reagan portrait). Diggins paints with a very broad brush. Reagan "may be, after Lincoln, one of the two or three truly great presidents in American history." This, he explains, is because "Reagan was one of the three great liberators in American history." Abraham Lincoln helped emancipate blacks from slavery; FDR helped wrest Western Europe from fascism; Ronald Reagan helped liberate Eastern Europe from Communism.

One aspect of this groundbreaking book reminds me of a personal encounter with Gen. Colin Powell 15 years ago. We were at one side of a social gathering and touched down on modern warfare. He said to me, "Of all the persons I have worked for or alongside, one stands out for his utter hatred of the nuclear bomb, and that is Ronald Reagan."

Diggins plows this theme deeply. He tells us that the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, on which our defense policy rested for 40 years, could not engage Reagan's mind because his imagination declined to accept the postulate of cities and peoples held hostage by the prospect of annihilation.

Some of us, while accepting the generality that Reagan treated nuclear bombs with the correct balance of horror and appreciation, continue to believe that his contingent disposition to use them for certain purposes made strategic peace talks possible. What Reagan could not have done is treat the deployment of nuclear weapons as nothing more than the mechanistic next step in a war progressing neatly up the rungs of firepower, in the manner of a regimental commander calling for more artillery.

But one needs to guard against a happy infusion of Emersonian sunniness into such problems as we confront in other parts of the world. It was a wonderful irony of history when, early in the week, American representatives in Europe assured Russia that the reason for our freshly installed antimissile inventory has nothing to do with any feelings we have about a potential threat from Russia—that our machinery is to guard against Iran. And when Iran is no longer a threat?

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

"All right—how about this color of mud?"

happy warrior

MARK STEYN

Their No-State Solution

IF you read the paper, you'll notice that there are a handful of places that attract the attention of everybody who matters—the U.N., EU, IAEA, NGOs, the full alphabet soup. You'll further notice that, for the fellows pressing ahead with Iran's nuclear program or mopping up the few remaining opportunities for mass murder in Darfur, attracting the attention of the planet's A-listers seems to make not a jot of difference. The bigshot acronyms hold meetings, and the crises they're holding the meetings over trundle along pretty much on schedule.

What then of those problems that don't even catch the jet set's eye? It was about three years ago that I began following events in southern Thailand—the old Sultanate of Pattani, to us Mad Dogs and Englishmen. It was the numbers at first: Muslim "insurgents" were murdering over a hundred people a month, which seemed rather on the high side. Then I started looking for the bloody details behind the statistics: the two Laotian-immigrant farm workers beheaded for . . . well, for what? The Thai government isn't occupying Palestine or invading Iraq or stationing troops in Saudi Arabia. And for a while I took to citing the country's southern provinces as a bit of list filler to demonstrate the splendidly ecumenical nature of the jihad: Muslims vs. Jews in the West Bank, Muslims vs. Christians in Nigeria, Muslims vs. Hindus in Kashmir, Muslims vs. Buddhists in Thailand.

Aside from bringing up the rear in my planetary generalizations, what's going on? The *International Herald Tribune*, in a brief story on the daily barrage of bombings and beheadings, decided it made no sense:

> The insurgency is all the more difficult to combat because it does not show its face. Unlike similar movements around the world, this one has not set out its demands or published a manifesto. It is a collection of violent groups without an identifiable central leadership.

You don't say. Now why would that be? When the *Herald Tribune* refers to "similar movements around the world," it seems to be harking back to the good old days of 1960s nationalist movements. Your old-school insurgent got into the insurgency game against the state because he wanted to *be* the state: The object was to have your flag fluttering from the palace and swear yourself in as President-for-Life. A generation or so back, there were such groups running around Pattani promoting a more or less conventional Malay-Muslim secessionist movement. But, as in other parts of the globe, the disaffected have become co-opted into something bigger. Who wants to settle for being minister of transport when you can be part of a new caliphate that overthrows the entire global order?

Kipling never saw the flights coming in at Heathrow or Manchester.

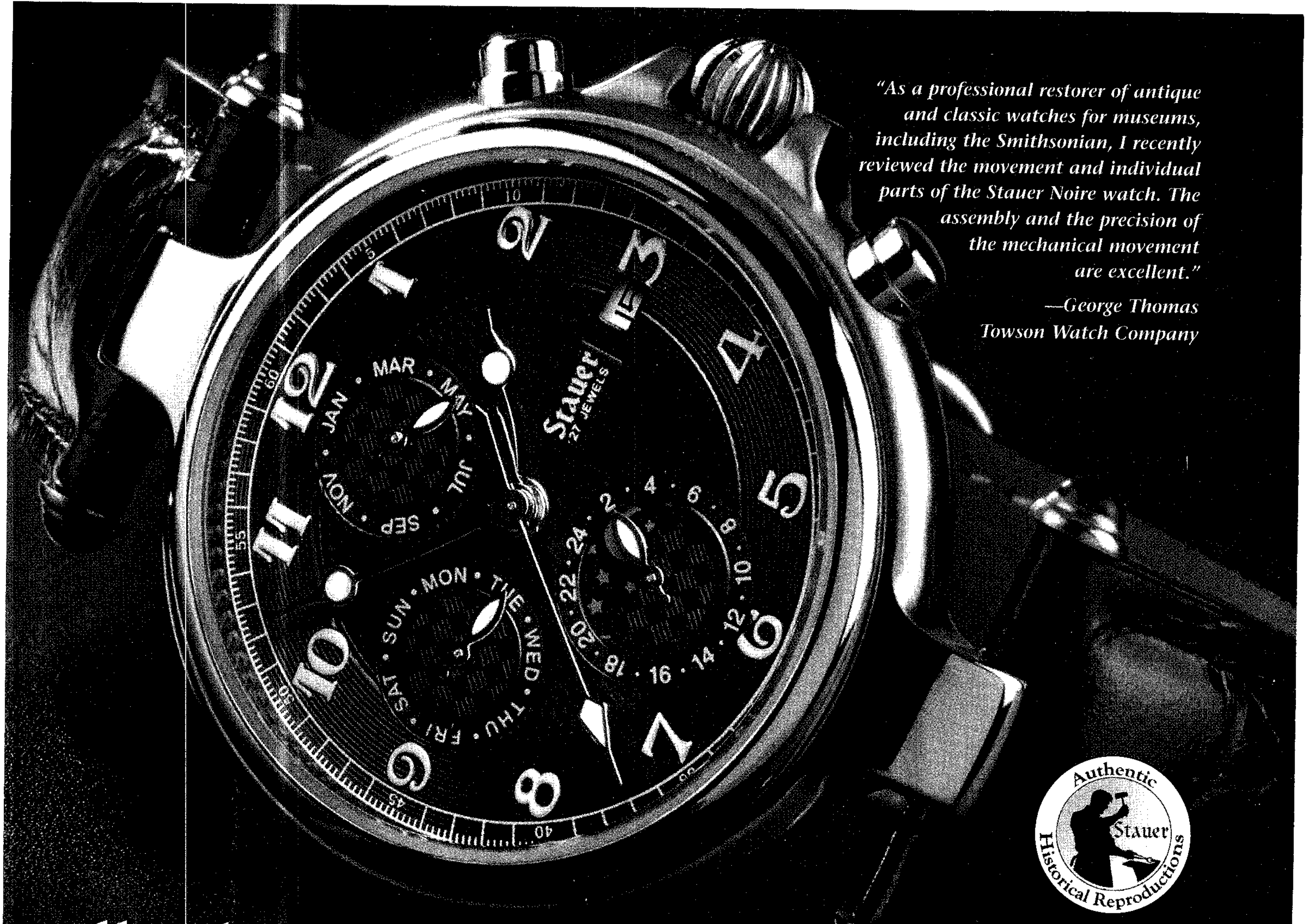
To modify the Palestinian peace-process clichés, these "collections of violent groups" are in favor of a no-state solution. In Thailand, they target the lowest officials of the kingdom—schoolteachers, policemen, and municipal functionaries. The object is to emphasize that not only can these people not protect you but associating with them is likely to endanger you, too. If the state reacts with a bloody crackdown on Muslims, that's good news for the insurgents. If the state instead dithers uncertainly, that works, too. The Buddhist villages in the south are emptying out, week by week, remorselessly.

There are no-state solutions popping up hither and yon these days, from Somalia to southern Lebanon to Waziristan. If you can hollow out a state from within, the husk provides useful cover for all kinds of activities, as we should have learned from Afghanistan. In fact, these non-state actors practice a more effective multilateralism than most great powers. There's a kind of United Non-Nations Insecurity Council out there that seems all but impervious to disruption. According to the South Asia Analysis Group, a thousand Pattanis are studying in Pakistani madrassahs and Wahhabi-Deobandi money and ideology from Waziristan is the principal source of radicalization of Thai Muslims.

In the wake of the July 2005 London Tube bombings by British-bred Muslims with strong ties to Pakistan, General Musharraf officially banned any non-Pakistani students from studying in his country's toxic madrassahs. Unofficially, life went on much as before. That's another advantage of the no-state solution: In effect, the Islamists move Western allies into the field of fire. The roots of many problems from the Horn of Africa to Iraq to Southeast Asia to northern England lie in the Pakistani tribal lands, but Washington has no desire to add to General Musharraf's woes. Likewise, the king of Thailand's increasingly nominal sovereignty over Pattani and the "government" of "Lebanon"'s over Hezbollahstan provide similar cover.

And what of the other end of the ideological pipeline? East is East and West is West and ne'er the twain shall meet, but Kipling never saw Heathrow and Manchester airports when the flights land bearing Pakistani wives from the old villages for young Muslim husbands in Bradford and Leeds and Birmingham and Bristol. There, too, is another no-state solution in the making.

Do you know Thomas P. M. Barnett? He's a very successful author, wonderfully optimistic and full of terrific technocratic advice on how to integrate the "gap"—the collapsed fringes of the map—into the functioning "core." I'm a pessimist. If the fellows who run the Western world took Dr. Barnett's advice, things would be swell. But in practice it's very difficult to crank the State Department or the EU into action, and by the time they move it's too little, too late. And those crises that don't even make the headlines, like the Buddhist villages of southern Thailand, will bleed quietly to the dark fringes. Where's Richard Gere's Oscar-night speech when you need it? **NR**



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